

THE SOUL'S ATLAS

AND OTHER SERMONS

BY THE

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To
MY FATHER AND MOTHER,
Who Illustrate by Example
All That is Here Taught by Precept,
This Volume is Dedicated in
Gratitude and Affection

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I

THE SOUL'S ATLAS

"After I have been there, I must also see Rome."—Acts
xix. 21.

THE Bible is the soul's wonder-book. It is strangely alive with the outer and the inner, the seen and the unseen, the written and the unwritten, concerning human life and destiny. Its historic content is the treasure of earth's literature. Its symbolism stirs the imagination from deep to height. Its spirituality inspires the whole man. It is unique in its power to arouse the dull, the leaden, the dormant in human nature. Whenever a shaft from the Biblical quiver goes home there is an instantaneous flash of answering, smouldering fire from within. Sometimes its simplest words abound with mystic suggestiveness. Sometimes its commonplaceness glows with incandescent splendour. Sometimes its unvarnished everydayness becomes a revealing curtain through which the mind passes on into the silent, uncharted realms.

My text is a striking illustration of this phase of our Bible. "After I have been there, I must also see Rome." Could there be a plainer, a more un-

pretentious statement? It is clearcut, straightforward, definite, prosaic. And yet, when I recall the man behind the words, the calm, purposeful determination they express, the cities involved, the civilization begun, the history made, the heroism displayed, the martyrdom achieved, the passage drops its prosaic matter-of-factness, while its every word begins to sparkle like the facets of a diamond. I seem to perceive in the verse a suggestion of "The Soul's Atlas"—a spiritual geography, a hidden significance, a meaningful symbolism, a chart of the inner journey of the soul from the cities of earth to the City of God.

I

There is, first of all, the point of departure: "After I have been there." And where is that? Why, Jerusalem—humanity's spiritual capital, the city of the prophets, the city of the Great King, the city where our Lord taught and died and rose again. Before ascending into heaven, He "commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith He, ye have heard of Me."

Every soul, then, must have its Jerusalem. Jerusalem stands for the personal downflow of spiritual radiance from the Most High. Life's august calling is to accept "the promise of the Father." This is the first, the supreme, the essential equipment for

the journey from Jerusalem to Rome, from existence to life, from glory to glory, from earth to heaven. Until one has attended to this, he has really done nothing, however energetic and varied his activities. He is, at best, only a strenuous failure. On the other hand, the life which opens to the Jerusalem of the Holy Spirit, when measured against the things of time and sense, is a magnificent success.

It is purely a question, I say, of alignment, of accordance with the deeps and heights of being. One may pitch his life on the scale of zero. Our Lord tells us how this is done: "Without me ye can do nothing." Or, a man may key his nature to the music of the inner spheres. Paul tells us how this is done: "I can do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth me." It is with souls, I think, as with two birds I know. One is my own, the other is my neighbour's. My bird is a beautiful creature. His plumage is as yellow as yellow gold. He lives in a handsome cage. He eats and drinks and seems to be in perfect health. But, for some reason, he has lost his song, and leads a songless life. Musically speaking, he is not in a state of grace. Now, I have never seen my neighbour's bird. I don't know whether he is handsome or not. But I do know that he can sing. I have heard him warble on June mornings until my neighbour's home and my own were fairly rained upon by his liquid showers of enchanting sweetness. And he flutes

through the silver morn, he flutes through the heated noon, he flutes on into the fading day. Evidently, my neighbour's bird sings because he drinks from the fountain of song. He has visited the Jerusalem of bird melody. So, he makes the air waves musical with the songs he has learned there.

Now, the songless bird and his singing neighbour are a parable of souls. Some of us never make any spiritual music because we have not tarried at Jerusalem. Unlike Paul, we have not definitely "purposed in the spirit" to visit the upper kingdoms of peace, power, and reality. And some of us have been there, but we have forgotten the soulful songs we learned. Our memories are bad because our practice is not good. And some of us are foolishly afraid to test the reality of the invisible things of God. Consequently, we go through life playing a spiritual game of hide and seek, of blindman's buff. We begin each morning with a "perhaps." We close each day with a sense of failure. On the lower slopes of life we talk much of natural selection. But we readily forget that, with the coming of God in the flesh, and since His passing into the eternal homelands of the spirit, "the issues of the new order in this world are being shaped more and more by the new force of human choice, and less and less by the old force of natural selection, which men are more and more deflecting and reversing." I recall, just here, the words of Goethe: "There seems as it were a presentiment of the whole uni-

verse to lie in you, which, by the harmonious touch of poetry, is awakened and unfolded." I count it a great saying, worthy of a great poet and thinker. Only, instead of saying that the presentiment of the universe lying within us is awakened by a touch of poetry, I would say: The awakenment and unfoldment of the cosmic majesty of human life is the direct result of the overshadowing power of the Highest, the harmonious blending of the rent inwardnesses of life into the Kingdom of God, which is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Oh, believe me, my friends, no soul is equipped for its pilgrimage through the years until it is able to say: "I have been there; I have visited the Jerusalem of the Holy Spirit." If a speck of radium can ring a bell thirty thousand years, surely the unbroken shine of the Holy Spirit in a soul can make it as deathless as God, as pure as the blood of the Lamb, slain before the foundation of the world.

II

Closely related to the point of departure is the might of Christian manhood: "After I have been there, I——!" What majesty is packed into that personal pronoun! What reservoirs of power are inclosed therein! Capital "I's" are sown in Paul's epistles as thick as flower seed in a garden. Yes; there is abundance of egoism here. But it is a transfigured egoism, an egoism that lightens from

behind, an egoism as subdued as the afterglow of an October sunset. The lustrous glory of Another beats back of this oft-used pronoun, which reveals a shimmer from within. It is said that Matthew Arnold took a childlike pleasure in his own performances. When some one recalled something he had said or written, he would answer: "Did I say that? How good that was!" Similarly, Paul experiences a radiant satisfaction in his noble ministry. But it is all for the sake of his Lord: "It is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me."

Here, then, is manhood's true type. Here is the secret of its royal might. Here is the key to its rich and mystical inwardness. We are sweetly ushered into God by the eternal Son. He is heaven's Pattern Man. He shows us how manhood is to travel the broad, spacious ways of the universe. Clerk-Maxwell says that atoms "continue this day as they were created, perfect in number and measure and weight." Yet, Nature is not more careful of its type than God is careful of His typical Man. Therefore, manhood's splendid might reaches its coronation in the Christ of God. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. And His way is as magnificent as the universe. His truth is as clean and high as the stars. His life is as pure as the shining perfections which stream from the heart of God into the soul of humanity.

It is well, I believe, to insist upon this sublime truth with unflinching accuracy. As truly as the

sun is the power house of earth's energy, so Christ is God's law and life for the soul. If there is scientific fact in the one realm, there is spiritual certitude in the other. Astronomers speak with authority concerning the movements of worlds. Chemists know the result which follows the combination of certain chemicals. Physicists talk with some degree of precision about molecules, atoms, and electrons. We camp in a world of physical law. But we home in a world of spiritual grace. And it is not at all complimentary for us to be more familiar with the utensils of our camp than with the wonders and glories of our home. Yet Christ alone can save us from this mistake. Without Him we are easy victims to sight and sense. Oh, what a tragedy is told in these two lines of Emerson:

“Why did all manly gifts in Webster fail?
He wrote on Nature's grandest brow, For Sale.”

One of the most brilliant men Cambridge University gave England was Richard Monckton Milnes. His friend O'Brien one day said to him, almost prophetically: “You are near something very glorious, but you will never reach it.” No; the stainless heavens of manhood cannot be reached, except the Christ reign within, man's only hope of glory. Hawthorne believed that “to the untrue man the whole universe is false—it is impalpable—it shrinks to nothing within his grasp.” Now,

Christ forestalls that awful being named an untrue man. An untrue man may hunt the worlds through without finding standing-room. The inviolable order of the universe is forever opposed to him. "How often," Liddon wrote of his mother, "do I think of her words during the last Oxford vacation spent with her: 'You may become a great scholar, but will you become a true Christian?'" A proper answer to that question, my friends, determines the might of our manhood, the queenliness of our womanhood. No man is so gifted but Christ can enrich his gifts a thousandfold. No woman is so ungifted but Christ can impart to her a wealth surpassing rubies and diamonds. Every soul is so made that only Christ can bring it to self-realization. When the human pronoun "I" is agleam with Christ's glory, we behold a radiance like unto that which breaks from the Great White Throne.

III

Moreover, there is another clear mark upon our atlas. It is the surge of compulsion: "I must." Here is the confession of a soul in the grip of luminous forces, the ecstasy of a man intoxicated by celestial elixirs, the harmony of a spirit swept by the musical winds of Paradise. "I think that the last lesson of life," says a true prophet of the soul, "the choral song which rises from all elements and all angels, is a voluntary obedience, a

necessitated freedom." And it is this voluntary obedience, resulting in a necessitated freedom, which surges with compelling awe through Paul's heart. It is the song of a dazzled man, the croon of a soul grown rhythmic and tender, profoundly conscious of the deeps and heights of being!

Now, is it not just this soul-swell of holy constraint, of glorious freedom, of driving compulsion, which is so manifest in those who love Christ? They are magnetized by the spiritual currents He sends through their being. They are good citizens of the universe, because they are saints in the flesh. They live as those who are sure that heaven is just over the hills behind the stars. They are divinely possessed souls, and they glory in the holy frenzy with which they have been seized. Paul says: "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake." John the Baptist exclaims: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." John, the lover, declares: "As many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become children of God." Peter affirms: "Ye were going astray like sheep; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls." Thus run only a few strains of the soul-melody responding to the Master's touch. Why, Christians march to the music which makes the music of the spheres. Plato defines the philosopher as "he who has magnificence of mind, and is the spectator of all time and all ex-

istence." Yet we only begin to take the measure of a Christian by saying he has magnificence of soul, and is the spectator of both time and eternity, because he is the conscious heir of eternal life, which is the gift of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. No wonder, then, that this surging, apostolic compulsion, this "I must" of a magnetized soul, survives on and on through the centuries, reminding us that there is still "a musical isle in the river of time."

IV

The surge of compulsion is followed by the broadening vision: "I must see." Oh, what eyes Paul had! I do not mean their colour. I do not mean their size. I mean their power of penetration, their breadth of vision, their starward reach, their capacity for seeing in behind the back of things. One man said of another: "He seems to see out of every pore of his skin." It is true of Paul. And where did Paul get his wondrous eyes? Why, from his Master. Sight is the gift of life in Jesus Christ. We never really see until we yield our wills, our brains, our souls to Him. He gives us "a glimpse of incomprehensibles, and thoughts of things that thoughts but tenderly touch." We see so little, my friends, because we are so little alive. The eyes in our heads are dull because the eyes of our hearts have not been opened by Him. As He steals in our eyes steal open. And then we begin

to see. The longer He abides the more we see. The deeper He dwells the truer, the farther, the higher, we see. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see—God."

I say perspective, vision, insight is the result of life. And life's inveterate enemy is sin. That is why Paul admonishes the Romans to "reckon ye yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus." We dally with sin, and sin poisons our life. Sin is the brutal Philistine that puts out our eyes. And then we blindly pull down the temple of life in ruins. The strength that should manifest itself in heartening, purifying vision of God is expended in self-destruction. The great German's last cry was: "Light! Light! Light!" We need not make light our cry at the last. We may make it our deepest possession now, the truth of our inward being, the unfading splendour of our hearts. "Wherefore he saith: Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." That is, awake, arise, receive light from its primal source. For in Him is life, and the life is the light of men.

No; the richly broadening vision does not come with more culture, a nobler philosophy, a modern education. The light of vision flashes when the fountain of life brims. And the vision fades when the stream of life goes dry. And go dry it must, except it be fed from the eternal springs.

V

Finally, our atlas reveals the pilgrim's goal: "I must see Rome." And what is Rome? Rome is the ultimate circumference of the soul's service on behalf of its Lord. And the finest service the human spirit can render is to be a distributor of life—life in Christ Jesus. Rome is the world—sick, dying, near unto death. Only the winds of eternal life can blow her expiring embers into deathless flame. Rome has had philosophy. Rome has had eloquence. Rome has had poetry. Rome has had law. Rome has had art. And yet Rome is dying, almost dead. But before Rome has taken her place alongside the illustrious corpses buried in the graveyards of history, and while the pulse of the renowned patient is beating low and slow, Paul says, as Israel said of Joseph in Egypt: "I must go and see him before I die." In that meeting Rome will die, and so will Paul. But the dying city shall hear from the lips of the dying man, imprisoned and chained underneath her tottering tread, a message of eternal life: "Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, of the seed of David, according to my Gospel!"

"Oh Rome! my country! city of the soul!
The orphans of the heart turn to thee,
Lone mother of dead empires!"

But in turning to thee, our eyes look away across
the blue Mediterranean, on and on to our point of

departure, where the immortal journey began, the Jerusalem that is below. And having been there, we glance past the seven-hilled city on the Tiber to "the Jerusalem that is above and is free, which is our mother"—our great white queen-mother that sits beside the crystal sea!

"Jerusalem the golden,
With milk and honey blest,
Beneath thy contemplation,
Sink heart and voice oppressed;
I know not, O, I know not,
What social joys are there;
What radiancy of glory,
What light beyond compare.

"O sweet and blessed country,
The home of God's elect!
O sweet and blessed country
That eager hearts expect!
Jesus, in mercy bring us
To that dear land of rest;
Who art, with God the Father,
And Spirit, ever blest!"

My friends, if you have not already done so, will you not this moment seek the Jerusalem of the Holy Spirit? Will you not covet the might of Christian character? Will you not experience the surge of divine compulsion? Will you not receive Christ's broadening vision? Will you not become a homing pilgrim, with your eyes looking beyond the hills of time's night to the fair morning lands of eternal day?

II

THE UNASHAMED APOSTLE

"For I am not ashamed of the Gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."—ROMANS i. 16

WE are here face to face with an imperial personality. And what is personality? Personality is the most majestic thing in the universe. The worlds are the outflashings of personality. Behind all that is, is the Supreme Personality. Now, a great human personality is explained by conscious contact with the Eternal Person. And no human being comes into vital touch with God except through the mediating life of Christ Jesus. "No one cometh unto the Father but by Me." When a man finds the God revealed in Christ, he has found the secret of the universe. In time and eternity, his store of wisdom will, of course, increase. But all his learning will take its departure from this master truth: He has realized God in Christ. For when Christ comes into a man, and the man comes into Christ, you have the final fact of the universe of matter and of spirit. You have therein the purpose of God for humanity. You have therein, also, the goal of humanity in God.

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Great human personality, then, is the creation of a Divine Person. It is this that explains Saint Paul and Saint John. It is this, also, that explains Augustine, Luther, Wesley, Schleiermacher, Robertson, and Brooks. The finest thing in the Epistle to the Romans is not its doctrine. And I think its doctrine about the sublimest idea that ever moved along the highways of human thought. Shakespeare was the myriad-minded man. Saint Paul was the God-minded man. There is a difference. Of course, God created Shakespeare's mind. None other could do that. But God created Saint Paul's mind, and then homed in it in a most extraordinary way. Still, behind the doctrine of Romans stands a man. And behind a man stands the God-Man. When the God-Man gets behind a man, you have the key which unlocks the house of life in which a Saint Paul lives.

Now, I want you to glimpse at three of the roses which grow upon the bush of this Christianized personality. First, the rose of thanksgiving: "I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is proclaimed throughout the whole world." Second, the rose of prayerful intercession: "For God is my witness, whom I serve in my spirit in the gospel of his Son, how unceasingly I make mention of you, always in my prayers making request, if by any means now at length I may be prospered by the will of God to come unto you." Third, the rose of Christian humanitarianism: "I am debtor

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both to Greeks and to Barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the Gospel to you also that are in Rome."

This brings us to our theme: "The Unashamed Apostle." There is in our text the plain statement of a fact, and the foundation of that fact.

I

The fact—what is it? "I am not ashamed of the Gospel." Now, back of this statement lies another: "I am ready to bring good tidings to you also that are in Rome." Rome, I think, is the secret spring which throws open a window in the apostle's unashamed soul. Rome—haughty, pagan, philosophic Rome! Rome—powerful, wealthy, magnificent Rome! Rome, with her bloody Coliseum! Rome, with her Neronian Golden House! Rome, with her Ciceronian Forum! Rome—godless, sinning, dying Rome! "I am not ashamed to preach the Gospel in Rome. Her philosophers may laugh it down. Her emperor may turn its converts into blazing torches. Her maddened populace may shout: 'Christians to the lions!' But I have just what Rome needs. I have just what Rome must have. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the Gospel to you also that are in Rome."

Oh, the daring of it! Oh, the courage of it! Oh,

the faith of it! Oh, the love of it! Here is a lone Christian man challenging the mightiest empire in time. Here is a scholar with something more than scholasticism. Here is a philosopher who has mastered the philosophy of history. Here is a "good soldier" who outsoldiers great Cæsar. Here is a destroyer of pagan empires and a builder of Christian kingdoms. Here is the hot heart of a Christian lover firing dead hearts with hope and peace and joy. Here is a man grasping after the flying fragments of a vanishing civilization, endeavouring to fuse those fragments through the power of Christian dynamics, bent on saving the scarlet empire for the Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

No; Paul was not ashamed of the Gospel. And why was Paul not ashamed of the Gospel? Because he was so big. He was re-cast in the Gospel mould. He was re-fashioned on the Gospel plan. The result is a colossal man, unafraid and unashamed to confront a colossal empire with his Gospel. It takes a big man not to be ashamed of the Gospel. A little fellow can blush to the roots of his hair every time the Gospel is mentioned.

Let me ask again: Why was Paul not ashamed of the Gospel? I answer: Because the Gospel melted him down and made him over. Paul had been cast in a false mould. It took him some thirty years to find it out. But I submit that it is better to take thirty years for such a discovery than to

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discover it never. Some otherwise smart people have walked clean across our world and never discovered that they needed to be re-made. Walter Savage Landor was such an one. This is the way he tells about it:

“I strove with none, for none was worth my strife.
Nature I loved, and next to nature, Art.
I warmed both hands at the fire of life;
It sinks, and I am ready to depart.”

Does this sound like a man who had really warmed both hands at the fire of life? Is there anything masculine and massive in such a song? How does it sound over against the apostle's swan-song: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith!” The one is a languid æsthete. The other is a Christian athlete. The Landors are once-born men. The Pauls are twice-born men. The Landors are phantomatic. The Pauls are gigantic. The Landors are worldly-wise only. That is why they were so microscopically small. That is why they scarcely shadow the microscope of history. They were clever enough. They were brilliant enough. They might have been telescopic. But they insisted on remaining microscopic. They cannot be found now with the X-rays. They have walked on among the impenetrable shadows. They were by choice too small to be made large by the Gospel. They were so little that they were ashamed of the

Gospel. Too often, alas! they have left only a shameless memory.

Now, let us face this fact: Any person is ashamed of the Gospel, until that person has been re-created by the Christ of the Gospel. We need not be surprised at this. I assure you that it is an altogether natural, human, psychological attitude. And why? Because the Gospel is the most ultra-radical, revolutionary power that humanity knows. Gilbert Chesterton is right when he says: "Christianity even when watered down is hot enough to boil all modern society to rags. The mere minimum of the Church would be a deadly ultimatum to the world." And what is the Gospel, the good tidings? Just this: On the one side there is a holy, loving God. On the other, there is a lost, sinful humanity. The problem is to bring the holy God and the sinful humanity together. How shall it be done? The Gospel gives the answer: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have eternal life." Here you have a holy God, a given Saviour, and a perishing humanity. "But is humanity really perishing?" some one asks. "That is the modern question." Oh, no, my friend, there is nothing modern about your question. It is so old as to be almost obsolete. For men have always said that they were not perishing. Men have always said that they were not sinners. Men have

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always said that they were quite respectable in God's sight.

Still, we are being told to-day, as if it were something new, that God's obligations to humanity are very great, indeed. But does not the Gospel, the whole plan of Christian redemption, emphasize God's yearning over humanity from the moment His prodigal went astray? "Adam, where art thou?" is the wail of a broken heart. "Father, forgive them!" is the prayer of a bleeding heart. Therefore, what are all your man-made schemes in comparison with the Gospel? At best, they are only theologic, psychologic, socialistic fads. We talk about the new humanism. The Gospel talks about the new humanity. We talk about the new social ideal. The Gospel talks about the Kingdom of God. We talk about modern education. The Gospel talks about ancient, mediæval, and modern regeneration. Let us accept all the sweet, new light that God is pouring in upon us. But let us remember that it comes from Our Father who art in Heaven, through Christ, humanity's King and Lord.

Yes; every man is ashamed of the Gospel until it has re-created him. He is more than ashamed of it. He fights it, he mocks it, he scorns it. The natural man is at least tremendously and consistently human. He talks sonorously of the battle between reason and revelation. But it is only a meagre makeshift. The battle is definitely "be-

tween two philosophies—the philosophy of God and the philosophy of the world.” The man who is a victim of worldly philosophy is ashamed of the Gospel. He could not be otherwise, if he would. The man who is the child of the philosophy of God is not ashamed of the Gospel. He could not be, if he would. He says, in the words of this unashamed apostle: “By the grace of God, I am what I am.”

II

Paul defines the Gospel as the divine dynamite. He declares that it is nothing less than the power of God. He also says that he is not ashamed of it. And he submits a twofold reason for his holy pride in the Gospel.

First, because it is the power of God. For the Gospel is not the power of man. It is well to remember this fact. It is well to remember it because men are always tempted to forget it. Our age is not peculiar in that it offers many substitutes for the Gospel. We thereby simply prove ourselves true brothers to all past ages. One of the pathetic phases of human life is this: Every generation sincerely believes that its problems are altogether new. The fact is, for the most part, our problems are altogether old. Professor Eucken reminds us that since the Renaissance humanity has been striving to attain its majority. But why limit it to the

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Renaissance? Why not be perfectly frank, and push it back to the Garden of Eden?

Now, it is not unfortunate that each age thinks itself confronted by entirely new problems. On the contrary, it is an essential factor in the education of the race. It is one of God's wise ways of getting His work done by men. Every generation is like a child. That budding boy of yours is confident that he is a radically new feature on this planet. In a sense, it is quite true. His unflecked innocence, his fresh young face, his self-confidence, his high ideals, his brave hopes—all these stamp him as one of the perennially new glories flaming from the processional of divine life. Still, his seniors know that he is not fundamentally different from the dear boys of vanished generations. It is good that the boy should think himself thoroughly new. That is at once the mystery and safeguard of his individuality. It would not be so good, however, were the boy to go on into manhood foolishly imagining that he is in no sense linked up with his brother men.

So, also, it is a mark of God's wisdom that every age should have the lustiness and vigour of youth. But it is clearly the mark of an age's folly to insist that its problems have never been paralleled, that its demands are absolutely unique, that there are no sure foundations upon which it may repose its rushing, restless, weary life. Now, it is just here that the Gospel holds out to humanity its exhaustless

reservoirs of life and hope. When men begin to fail and falter, to stumble and stagger, to doubt and despair, the revitalizing Gospel of the Eternal Christ, like yonder sun shooting down the battalions of darkness over the whitening fields of dawn, rays forth once again with primeval puissance, proving that it is both the power and wisdom of God. The Gospel is absolutely and inalienably for man. Let us never obscure this truth. The Gospel is absolutely and inalienably independent of man. Let us, also, never obscure this truth. For the Gospel is the power of God.

The power of God? Yes! But that is not the whole of the apostle's statement. "The Gospel is the power of God—*unto salvation!*" I like to think of the power of God. I like to gaze into the meadows of space. And I like to think that every fire-tinted blossom blooming there is a demonstration of the power of God. I like to stand upon the ocean shore. I like to listen to the sobbing, moaning, majestic sea. And I like, most of all, to think that old ocean can never spill over the sides of the vast cup in which it rages and roars. For that cup nestles down in the hollow of a hand named the power of God. I like to come from the supra-worlds to the infra-worlds by the aid of the microscope. For there every atom, and even every electron, has its own central sun and system of globes and satellites. And I like the microscopic worlds because they, like the telescopic worlds,

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preach wonderful sermons upon the power of God. I like, also, to peer into the many-splendoured heart of an orchid. For that velvet heart is so beautifully coloured and so marvellously shaped, that it is worthy to be the floral urn for catching the scalding tears of a fallen angel. But I like the orchid, supremely, because it reminds me of the power of God in the realm of colour.

Yet the power of God in worlds, in oceans, in atoms, in electrons, in orchids, pales before "the power of God unto salvation." Here the power of God is raised to its highest. Here the power of God lays hold of His soiled children—"children of splendour and shame"—and washes them into a divine whiteness. Here the power of God blends life's discords into symphonies. Here the power of God softens sobs into psalms. Here the power of God knits fading hopes into tapestries of fadeless glory. Here the power of God extracts the sting of sin and inserts the shout of triumph. Here the power of God goes out from His own heart and brings back a wandering prodigal to that heart. "For the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." It undertakes to deliver every human being from doom, sin, and death. Oh, the glorious Gospel of the blessed God! Oh, the mighty power of God unto salvation!

Paul states his second reason for being unashamed of the Gospel in these words: "For

therein is revealed a righteousness of God from faith to faith: as it is written, But the just shall live by faith." What does the apostle mean by "a righteousness of God"? Is he speaking of righteousness as an attribute of God? Not here, I think. He does that in the third chapter and fifth verse. But here Paul is sounding the first note of the great doctrine of Romans—justification by faith. Does the phrase seem a trifle antiquated? Does it seem hard and dry? It should not, I am sure. For justification by faith is a spiritual garden wherein the valiant Christian knights have always loved to walk.

Briefly, let us try to grasp this sublime conception once again. Now, justification by faith has, as its background and foreground also, Christ crucified and risen again. On God's side there is grace—the pure, undeserved favour of God. On man's side there is faith—personal trust in a personal Saviour. Now, when the stream of grace pours through the conduit named faith, you have a justified soul, according to Paul. You have the righteousness which is bestowed on man by God. My faith in Christ as my Saviour is counted unto me for righteousness by God.

Can you improve that Gospel? You may try until doomsday, but you cannot *work* yourself up to it. Receive it on trust, as your child receives a gift from your hand, and you will never cease to work for God and humanity by reason of its en-

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riching strength. I find this entry in Canon Liddon's diary for February 4, 1876: "Walked out with the Master of Balliol. He wished to know how I thought the Bible could be made useful to people nowadays? I could only say by their believing and reading it. The point of the question was, I suppose, that they did not believe it." Now, here are words worthy of consideration. Benjamin Jowett and Henry Parry Liddon, though wide apart theologically, were among the tallest giants of the nineteenth century. Jowett was not only Master of Balliol College, but he started Thomas Hill Green upon the study of Hegel. Liddon was not only the greatest preacher in England, but he was one of the staunchest defenders the Christian faith has ever had. And what is Jowett's question to Liddon? "How can the Bible be made useful to people nowadays?" And what is Liddon's answer to Jowett? "I could only say by their believing and reading it." That conversation occurred over thirty-three years ago. After the lapse of a generation, if you know any other method of making the Bible useful to people nowadays, except by their reading and believing the Bible, I should like to know what that method is.

Oh, there is no other way! If, as Jowett seems to have suggested, the people neither read nor believed the Bible, then the Bible has nothing for the people. But that is not the whole of it. The people—be assured of this—have all the misery, all

the leanness of soul, all the doubt, all the despair, all the restless anxiety the Bible says they must have, when its God and Christ and Holy Spirit are neglected.

And that is why I want to repeat the statement made a moment ago: Justification by faith makes the soul to be as a watered garden. Why, just look at some of the spiritual plants which flourish there. The first is the consciousness of peace with God: "Being therefore justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Alongside this fragrant bush of peace grows the sturdy plant of patience in present suffering: "And not only so, but we also rejoice in our tribulations." And then, near by, stands one of the most majestic, mystical plants of all. What shall I call it? Well, it used to bristle with thorns. The thorns were ugly fears. And the thorns cut to the quick. For when thoughts of standing in the presence of a holy God enter a mind warped and scarred and seared by unpardoned sin, if the conscience is not entirely dead, then there is ever the smiting terror which accompanies "a certain fearful expectation of judgment." Ah! that is the name—the judgment plant! But now, thank God, it has been stripped of its thorns. It has been transformed into the plant of reconciliation. True, its leaves are dyed with deepest crimson. They are stained through and through with blood. But those leaves never fade. They wear their brilliant glories

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through all seasons. Hear the description of this vermilion shrub of reconciliation: "For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by His life; and not only so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation."

Do you wonder that Paul was not ashamed of the Gospel? It is the power of God raised to its highest power. It is the power of God unto salvation. Consequently, it is the highway to a deepening peace. It is the revelation of God's heart. It is the satisfaction of the unsatisfied longing of your own. Are you ashamed of such a Gospel? Brown-ing says, concerning this and all great matters, we judge ourselves:

"How the world is made for each of us!
How all we perceive and know in it
Tends to some moment's product thus,
When a soul declares itself—to wit,
By its fruit, the thing it does!"

Will you not declare yours a redeemed soul, by receiving Christ as Saviour, Lord, and King? Deliberately do so just now!

III

THE SPLENDOUR-SLAIN

"And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as one dead."—
REV. i. 17.

IT is the confession of a splendour-slain soul. A banished, lonely man stands on a solitary, sea-washed isle. But he is true brother to all "in the tribulation and kingdom and patience which are in Jesus." Thus his physical loneliness is forgotten in the spacious, universal, social consciousness. Fellowship with the eternal—the eternal in man and the eternal in God; love for the Highest, which he has seen garbed in warm-blooded human flesh; in a word, brotherhood and vision have made the Patmos Seer exquisitely sensitive to the melodies and glories of another world. So, Patmos is now neither bleak nor lonely. It is an enchanted island—a splendid jewel set in an ethereal sea—and the whole universe seems intent on stopping at its golden shores.

Why, the white societies of the heavenlies have come to visit John on his sea-girt isle. The martyrs, having put off their blood-dyed garments for robes of pure white, are there. The redeemed, loosed from their sins by the blood of the Lamb,

are there. The old, old harpers from before the dawn of time, are there. The snow-clad angels, with woven lightnings for wings and ocean-thundered waves for voices, are there. Heaven's rain-bowed throne, flashing in emerald brilliance, and occupied by One "to look upon like a jasper stone and a sardius," is there. Streams of radiance pour down the sides of the universe and meet in one vast, limitless, molten sea of glory.

Now, John was able to endure the sight of all—save One. He beheld the redeemed, the harpers, the angels, the martyrs, with unblinded eyes. But when he saw the faithful Witness, the First-born of the dead, the Ruler of the kings of the earth, the Golden-girdled, the snow-white head, the fire-flaming eyes, the brass-burnished feet, the many-watered voice, the seven-starred hand, the sword-like mouth, the sunflashing countenance of the Eternal Christ, John exclaims: "When I saw him, I fell at his feet as one dead!"

My subject, then, is "The Splendour-Slain." Let us but have a true vision of our Lord. Then we, too, may be numbered among the royal company of those who fall dead at His feet, only to be lifted by His strong, tender, fearless hands to a height beyond all heights.

I

Think, first, of the splendour of Christ's white thought. "And His head and His hair were white

as white wool, white as snow." Thought, like the rainbow, has many colours. There is philosophic thought, scientific thought, psychologic thought, religious thought, economic thought, socialistic thought, biographic thought. The great minds have been able to gather one, two, sometimes three, rarely, indeed, four of these thought-colours, making them serviceable to mankind. But as the white reflects all the rays of the spectrum combined, so the splendour of Christ's thought gathers all scattered, mental rays into one pearl luster. Then, with a consciousness deeper than the sea, higher than the stars, wider than the world, longer than the ages, He says calmly, but irresistibly: "I am the truth."

Christ is the truth about life's ultimate, final things. One word of His empties a tide of meaning upon all life—"as mine-lamps enkindle a hidden gem." Great, indeed, is our debt to the imperial thinkers. Plato waved his thought-wand, and ideal republics arose in its magic wake. Aristotle was called nature's private secretary. For two centuries his works lay buried amid the rubbish of an old cellar. But thought refuses to be entombed, and at last—a kind of third day in the intellectual kingdom—the immortal Greek rose again from the dark and the damp. What a mind Moses must have had to have recorded the Ten Words of the old law! Inspired by God Moses unquestionably was. But is it not something regal,

something unique, to have possessed a brain capable of catching the thought-waves, engraving the breath of the Almighty upon its delicate tablets? Michael Angelo carried Saint Peter's tucked away in his brain-cells long, long before the magnificent cathedral soared up to the sky in its clothing of stone and marble, its interior studded with gold and precious gems. Voltaire is responsible for the story that the apple, in falling, struck Newton's head. This ancient object of Eve's undoing hit Newton so hard and made him so angry that he forthwith determined to find out what made that apple fall. Oh, precious, luscious, golden fruit! It must have fallen from the Tree of Life which blooms in the Garden of God! For, in questing his way through the realms of thought, Newton discovered the law of gravity and taught men that—

“The world was built in order,
And the atoms march in tune.”

So, we give thanks for these, and all true, great thinkers, living and dead. They have done their best, they have done well, they have done all that men could do. And they are nothing less than beams raying forth the Light of Life. Yonder sun shoots out myriad millions of rays. No insect, no leaf, no flower, no sprig of grass, no buried root, no trilling bird, no beast, no human, but may claim its beam. Yet is it not good to know that back of countless silver beams there is one central sun; that

behind every ounce of energy, every blush of beauty, every throb of life, in our world and all the worlds of our solar system, stands that unifying, exhaustless fountain of heat and fire named the sun? So the Sun of Righteousness shines in the realm of pure thought. His is the sun-mind, and all other thinkers are thought-beams. True, the beams have too often forgotten their source. In their brief, wingèd brilliance they have scandalously denied their parent sun. But the Sun still floods their minds with light as He keeps on His untroubled way through the heavens of thought. "There was the true light, even the light which lighteth every man, coming into the world."

"Light is light which radiates,
 Blood is blood which circulates,
 (Thought is thought which permeates),
 Life is life which generates,
 And many-seeming life is one."

He, and He alone, hath worn God's spotless thought-splendour through these aching human years. Once, and once only, in the history of our kind, have thought's many-coloured beams melted into "the supersolar blaze." Once, and once only, has a snow-white head domed a brain that passed its thinking into the crystal radiance of perfect truth. Life, death, character, joy, sorrow, sin, salvation, destiny, heaven—in all this higher mental pioneering, Christ is solitary, unapproachable, ab-

solutely supreme! Therefore, not to Plato, nor Aristotle, nor Moses, nor Angelo, nor Newton, nor to any of their kingly brethren, though the highest, holiest thinkers of the race, do we bow as we kiss the hem of thought's seamless garment. No! We look upon Him who was pierced, the enthroned thinker of the universe. We behold His head and His hair, white as white wool, white as snow. Then do we fall at His feet as one dead, stilled in the depth of His fathomless thought, grateful, loving brothers in the goodly company of the splendour-slain!

II

Think, also, of the splendour of Christ's burning vision. "And His eyes were as a flame of fire." Heaven's measure of a man is vision power. When intellect reaches its highest, it invariably breaks into the flame of vision. There are atmospheres of being so warm that in them the cold feet of intellect melt like wax in the July sun. Then doth the seraph of vision catch up the fainting soul and guide it on through the pilgrim realms of spirit. In vision hour, we see "the truths that never can be proved." Thus, it is no mere paradox to say that the intellectually unproved may be the spiritually ascertained. Of course, no visionless mind has ever been, or can be, a harmonious mind—a mind in which all the powers act concertedly and

completely. Now, it is because of the perfectly harmonious working of Christ's mental faculties, unclogged by the dirt of sin, unstained by the red of guilt, unchilled by the blasts of impurity, that the light of clear-splendoured vision shone so luminously in "His eyes which were as a flame of fire."

Not by way of comparison—for comparisons are never so odious as setting men alongside the Christ—but for the sake of appreciating His own infinite superiority, let us think, for a moment, of the lords of vision. Blind old Homer was the nightingale that warbled through the long nights of history's vanished dawns. Blind he was and poor, but Homer's dead eyes blazed with an inner, diamond light—the light of vision. What Homer was to Greece, Vergil was to Italy. But let us not forget that the *Æneid* waited for fifteen long centuries for a publisher. It is, indeed, touching and sublime to see Tennyson, in his old age, wrapped in his softly murmuring, singing robes, going back, as in his boyhood, to the sweet, fresh song-fountains of Vergil, in whom "all the charms of all the Muses often flowered in a lonely word." Vergil's songs are at times so fine and high as to burst into rosy golden vision. At a later time, Dante, by the light of vision, dugged new cellars under hell and trod new floors over heaven. Perhaps the mind of Raphael housed the most nimble, the most ideally beautiful imagination ever given

to mortal man. He Hellenized the Hebraic universe, replacing those stern old personages with ideal figures which thrill with "love's loveliest rapture."

And yet, compared with Christ's vision power, even the lords and kings of vision in every sphere are pathetically poor. Hugo said that Shakespeare's rhythm is so vast that it staggers. But Christ's rhythm is so vast, and so steady, clean, and high in its vastness, that it walks straight on to the last marge of the world, and then unweariedly climbs the sacred, happy hills of God. The best the lords of vision can do is to set their toy boats asail upon a painted ocean. But the Lord of the years and the spheres, the Pilot of Heaven's Deeps, puts His white eternal ships of vision out on the tumbling oceans of reality, and they all come sailing home at last to drop anchor in love's crystal seas. Too often, alas! the seers behold only phantasmal dreams. But Christ is the Master imperial and universal—the artist in white flesh and red blood, the transformer of matter-clogged spirit into high and glorious human character. What vision that could ensphere the ages: "And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven"! What vision that could call across the centuries to worn-footed humanity: "Come unto Me, all ye that weary and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"!

What vision to behold in the crucified Messiah a loadstone so resistless, so magnetic as to lift humanity's dead weight to His own august levels: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Myself"! What vision to trace the look of God following a fallen sparrow as well as a fallen angel: "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father"! What vision to see in behind the stained soul of a Magdalene the lily-white gardens of purity where, beyond these voices, both Guinevere and Mary may walk, hand in hand, the perfumed paths of peace: "Woman, hath no man condemned thee? Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more"! What vision that could people space with homing, untroubled hearts at last: "In My Father's house are many mansions"! Surely, if there is a scintilla of truth in Mr. Herbert Spencer's law of a universal rhythm, then the only possible hope of its realization lies in the splendour of Christ's burning vision, in Him whose "eyes were as a flame of fire," who opens up a world beyond the senses, where—

"The Peak is high and flush'd
 At his highest with sunrise fire;
 The Peak is high, and the stars are high,
 And the thought of a man is higher,
 A deep below the deep,
 And a height beyond the height!
 Our hearing is not hearing
 And our seeing is not sight."

III

Consider, moreover, the splendour of Christ's perfect service. "And His feet like unto burnished brass, as if it had been refined in a furnace." Why, His holy feet walked the pathway of human and divine service so gloriously as to leave a brass-burnished refinement glowing upon all spheres of service. Are you a pilgrim toiler on the road of sorrow, poverty, heartache, defeat, ingratitude, sin? Then, hear me, my friends, your roads intersect at the crossways which meet in the large place of God's heart, opened wide by Him who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister. Verily, Christ's service is the key, the interpretation to the service rendered by the universe itself. An old psalmist sang: "All things are Thy servants." Thus, every object in the universe is a letter in the alphabet of service. Stars and suns, oceans and rivers, mountains and plains, trees and flowers, atoms and electrons, birds and beasts, men and women—all are servants, bound by gold chains about the feet of God. But oh, how shadowy, how meaningless, how tongueless they were for millions of ages! Then, in the fulness of time, Christ came and gave these silent letters voice, pronouncing the word service in tones of flesh and blood, until they echoed around the world and thundered on and up behind the towering hills of stars! Henceforth nations and planets shall beat time to

the ageless, spheric symphony of service played out, amid tears and blood and triumph and immortal glory, by the Lamb that was slain from before the foundation of the world, by the Conqueror from Edom with crimsoned garments from Bozra, glorious in His apparel, marching in the greatness of His strength down "the ringing grooves of change," until He brings a white-robed humanity winging, singing Home at last!

Christ has forever vitalized the idea of service by revealing that nothing is foreign to God which is essential to man. He only chops off the rotten bark that the living blooms may put forth on the ever-growing human tree. And it is the very simplicity of His conception which almost smites us blind by its sky-born beauty. For instance, what is more familiar than water? Why, the Atlantic, the Pacific, the Indian Oceans have water to burn! Yet, if any man will but scoop up a few drops in the chalice of love and press its cooling freshness over against a disciple's thirsty lips, that man—"whosoever" he be—shall not go rewardless. Nay, his liquid drops shall be touched into love's diamond wine by the Lord of the Soul! "For whosoever shall give you a cup of cold water to drink, because ye are Christ's, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward." Oh, feed hunger-bitten lips, clothe wind-chilled bodies, take strangers in, visit the sick, go unto the prison, and

you shall unconsciously weave for your soul a robe of righteousness that will outshine the gold of sundown. You may not know it yourself, and the world may not know it. But He knows—ah, yes, He knows!—and one day you shall hear Him say: “Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these My brethren, even these least, ye did it unto Me.” Professor Peabody reminds us that “the prophets wrestled with the waves of social agitation; Jesus walked upon them. The difference was not so much one of social intention as of social horizon. The work of a reformer is for his own age; that of a revealer for all ages.” Let us, then, have something of the majesty and sweep of our Revealer’s horizon. Carlyle used to tell of an experience he had at Weimar. In a garden restaurant, seated under a may tree in full bloom, he saw Schiller and Goethe drinking coffee together. Slipping a thaler into the waiter’s hand, Carlyle was allowed to put on a white apron and wait upon those two kingdom-shaking men. What fun and honour the great Scotchman must have had! But you and I, my brethren, treading the brass-burnished path of service blazed out by our Master, not waiting upon Goethes and Schillers, it may be, but serving Christ’s little ones, shall have a joy that swells the souls of saints, a peace that snows softly down from the robes of angels, as we take our place in the high society of the splendour-slain!

IV

Consider, finally, the splendour of Christ's many-toned authority. "And His voice as the sound of many waters." It is a noble metaphor, surely, and grandly suggestive of our sober, glorious, Christian truth. Roll the volume of a thousand Niagaras into one harmonious tune of liquid thunder, then let every ripple in their foam-white, dashing, crashing, falling waters be touched into a rainbow, and Nature will paint you a picture of the ocean-like power and manifold diversity of Christ's authority. Why, His authority is in all, over all, and above all. Ultimately, everything has to be brought up to His style and manners of the sky. The heavens declare the glory of God; Christ unveils the heart of God. The firmament showeth His handiwork; Christ showeth His soul-work. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world, Christ's line reaches back into the eternities, and His words will travel on when the world hath reached its end and farmed out its scattering dust to the universal ether for newer and finer combinations of mind-stuff. Christ's authority is over all science, and yet He is not a scientist. Christ's authority is over all philosophy, and yet He is not a philosopher. Christ's authority is over all art, and yet He is not an artist. Christ's authority is over all poetry, and yet He is not a poet. Christ's authority is over all eloquence, and yet He

is not an orator. Christ's authority is over all statesmanship, and yet He is not a statesman. Christ's authority is over all socialism, and yet He is not a socialist. Christ's authority is over all commerce, and yet He is not a merchant prince. What, then, is the ruling sphere of the Great Unclassifiable? "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." And what is the name of our Great Misunderstood? "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." What is the joy He gives in exchange for life's crown of disciple-earned sorrow? "Ye therefore now have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no one taketh away from you." Verily, did not His voice, as the sound of many waters, break truth in "jewels five-words-long that on the stretch'd forefinger of all time sparkle forever"?

Oh, men and women, He is the one God, the one Man, our souls can afford to follow through the ever-widening kingdoms of the spiritual. How we need to enthrone His authority in every walk of life to-day! When on earth, He did not "lute and flute fantastic tenderness." How firm, how strong, how sovereign the manhood that looked and lived and breathed through Him! With more than womanly tenderness, He yet incarnated a rugged masculinity that sent ancient gods of wrong, though fair as classic angels, toppling and shivering down

from their stained pedestals. He gazed upon distress with eyes all summer; but upon petrified hypocrisy He turned a wintry, killing glance that froze with icelike gloom and doom. His hand was velveted with tenderness to wipe away the publican's tears; but it was gloved with steel to smite the pharisee's self-righteousness. Against all forms of injustice His indignation burned at white heat, as when billows of crackling flame roll across the wind-swept plains. Nor was He orb'd in unreal isolation—He was heaven's big-hearted, morning-souled warrior that rode at the head of the human battle. Thus, the light of His full-orb'd nature strikes upon the immortal soul like dawn upon the hills of earth. Gnarled deep in His oaken truth are "the wrestling thews that throw the world." When we obey Him—

"Then comes the statelier Eden back to men;
Then reigns the world's great bridals, chaste and calm;
Then springs the crowning race of humankind."

Let us, then, like John, join the shining ranks of the splendour-slain, hearing Him say: "Fear not; I am the first and the last, and the Living one, and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore." Then shall we answer: "O Love! how red Thy heart is, and Thy hands are full of roses!"

IV

FLESHING THE WORD

"And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth."—JOHN i. 14.

TWO Christmas stories are told in the Bible. Each is incomparable in its majesty and grandeur. Each is also complementary, essential to the other, because each fulfils and interprets the other. The first Christmas story tells of the birth of the material universe. It sings in simple but august notes of the nativity of worlds. It tells of that wonderful period when Jehovah created His material children named Light, Darkness, Day, Night, Mountains, Grass, Fruit, Seas, Stars, Sea-Monsters, Winged Fowls, crowning all with the creation of Man. Or, to change the figure, God touched the organ of His own harmonious being, and there came forth those golden harmonies of creation which clothed His face with approving smiles. "And God saw that it was good."

But, if possible, the second Christmas story told in the Bible is even grander than the first. Certainly it is of more interest to us as human beings, because we behold the Creator putting on the gar-

ment of Humanity. Moreover, if Genesis goes back to the beginning, Saint John goes back to the unbeginning beginning—back into those eternities of being when only the Trinal Godhead was, and there was naught beside.

Now, if Genesis recites the first Christmas story of the Universe and Man, my text recounts the second and final Christmas story of Man coming, through the Incarnation, to the vast dominion over the universe which was prophesied at his creation: “And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.”

And so, the text calls for a consideration of the Fleshing of the Word, the Homing of the Word, and the Glory of the Word.

I

The Fleshing of the Word: “And the Word became flesh.” Now, here is a very wonderful fact: this phrase throws us back upon the first verse of Saint John’s Gospel: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Returning to this verse, we are at once hurled back to the first verse of the first chapter of Genesis: “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” Then, after having gone back to

Genesis, Saint John, as if unsatisfied with origins and beginnings, plunges us back beyond Genesis into the infinities by saying: "In the beginning was the Word"—when the universe became, the Word already was. "And the Word was with God"—when the worlds began to be, the Word resided in the Godhead. "And the Word was God"—when earth and time were unclothed infants in the cradle of immensity, the Word not only was, and dwelt in God, but the Word was God!

This is awkwardly put, I know, but mountains cannot move with the smoothness of gently flowing streams. They come thundering down amid the roar and ruggedness of their own imperial grandeur. It is suggestive of Saint John's style when trying to float eternity upon a raft of human words. If the timbers of the raft are twisted and warped, it is because of the tremendous weight they bear—words groaning beneath their mighty meanings!

"And the Word"—what does it mean, anyway? Following Godet's suggestion, let us go back to Genesis once again. We find in that marvellous first chapter the phrase, "And God said," recurring, like a mighty refrain, no less than ten times. Now, Saint John gathers all those scattered sayings of God into one solid, glowing unity. All activities, all intelligences, all eternal movements—John "finds as the basis of all spoken words, the speaking Word." And this Word, according to John,

is the Creator, the Sustainer, the Redeemer, the Essential Light, the Principle of Life, God Himself.

Furthermore, this Invisible, Eternal, Creative Word came down and lifted our humanity up into Himself. "And the Word became flesh." How? Why, through a second and higher creation than the first. And here, in the presence of this second and new creation, all evolving categories, all evolutionary hypotheses, all specious theories—born or unborn, ancient or modern, exploded or exploding—fall dead—stone dead!—as did Saint John in the presence and glory of the apocalyptic angel. Hear the Gospel: "And the angel answered and said unto Mary, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." What, after all, if angels should happen to know more than untheological scientists and materialistic theologians! Science stands for the macrocosm—the physical world, that part of the universe which is exterior to man. Psychology stands for the microcosm—man, the little world, the epitome of the universe. Christmas stands for the "Deocosm,"—(the word is my own, let me confess at once, to free all lexicographers),—Jehovah, immanent, humanized, in the midst of the world He made, for "the Word became flesh."

Ah, yes! the Logos was fleshed! This is the wonder that wheels all other wonders into the rear!

I was interrupted just here in the writing of my sermon by a knock on the study door. The maid told me two ladies wished to see me. Going down into the parlour, I found a woman friend and a grandmother, holding in her proud arms a beautiful baby boy a few months old. And what did they want? Why, the child's mother was here on a short visit. As the little one had not been christened, the grandmother bundled him up and started out in search of a minister. I happened to be the lucky man. Well, if there is ever a time when I delight in giving a child to God in baptism, it is at the glad Yuletide. I feel, somehow, that the angels, in their itinerant ministries through the universe, circle nearer earth at this time than any other. It may be that Gabriel, who brought the good news to Zacharias, Elizabeth, and Mary, feels an intense tugging at his heart—a great longing every Christmas time—to quit, for a little space, the courts of glory and come earthward, to lead that singing band of angels in the song: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

At any rate, as I took the little babe in my arms to touch its brow with God's crystal waters, and to pray that the Holy Spirit might make his manhood as white as the innocence of his infancy, that wondering question neighbours asked around the cradle of John the Baptist, in the hill country of Judea, leaped to my lips: "What, then, shall this

child be?" But, as I held him in my arms, that was not all his untold life suggested. Ah! there were his mystic eyes—and I recalled what the great German said of his own child. He says he looked into those eye-windows one day, and there wasn't anybody there. Then, later on, he looked again, and Somebody had come to the windows and was looking out! Oh, the mystery of it—the mystery and wonder! And then I looked at his little cheeks, pure as half-opened buds and soft as wool. And then I touched his little hands, whose "silver skin was laced with golden blood." And all the time my mind seemed to be out in the eternal orbits, trying to hunt down the meaning of these lofty words—words which angel songs blew into silver blossoms of sound—words which trembled on the inspired lips of prophet, psalmist, evangelist, and apostle—"And the Word became flesh."

Wonder of wonders! the Eternal Word became a laughing, dimpled, cooing bundle of flesh! Oh, men, that is what made the star wander from its old orbit and find a new one! That is what made angels clear the battlements of the City of our God and sing above the Judean plains! That is what made shepherds to become kings, and kings to become puppets! That is what made, and is making, the brute man go down and the redeemed humanity go up! "The Word became flesh," and never again could the scales be balanced as of old. Milton, in his immortal "Hymn on the Nativity,"

sings the downfall of heathen gods, from dumb oracles on through the whole range of false divinities to the overthrow of Osiris, of whom the blind bard says, "Naught but profoundest hell could be his shroud." Then he goes on:

"He feels from Judah's land
The dreaded infant's hand,
The rays of Bethlehem blind his dusky eyne;
Nor all the gods beside
Longer dare abide,
Not typhon huge ending in snaky twine:
Our babe, to show his Godhead true,
Can in his swaddling bands control the damned crew."

II

Let us consider, in the second place, the Homing of the Word: "And dwelt among us." For my part, I like the other word better: "He tabernacled." Back there in the wilderness, the tabernacle was Jehovah's dwelling-place, the sacred spot where God and Israel met. "Now," says John, "as Jehovah took for His home a dwelling similar to that of the people in the wilderness, so the Word assumed a community of nature with mankind, an embodiment like that of humanity at large, and became flesh." Ah! God homed, He tabernacled, He dwelt among us! Why, the Incarnation is so wonderful that if Christ Himself had not said He came forth from God, I could not believe it. But because of His character and truthfulness, and because He

reincarnates Himself in every obedient life, I cannot help believing, for belief has crystallized into experience. And Christian experience is simply the fulfilling of Christ's desire that His disciple should become an expert, a master, through His grace, in the realm of spiritual reality.

"And He dwelt among us!" Oh, let me sing it into your hearts to-day! Better still, let the Holy Spirit whisper its majestic glory into your souls! Why, this is Heaven's cradle song for every crying heart! This is Heaven's medicine for every sin-sick soul! This is Heaven's hope for every hopeless man! This is Heaven's purity for every stained life! This is Heaven's unfading flower for every tired bosom! This is Heaven's water of life for every parched lip! This is Heaven's light for every starless night! This is Heaven's fragrant springtime for every dreary winter! This is Heaven's Christmas for every Christless heart! "And He dwelt among us!"—this is Heaven come to pay us a visit, and never to say good-bye! This is the great God and Father of our spirits, bending low over every human heart as He says:

"Think not thou canst sigh a sigh,
And thy Maker is not by;
Thinkest thou canst weep a tear,
And thy Maker is not near?"

"O He gives to us His joy
That our grief He may destroy,
Till our grief is fled and gone
He doth sit by us and moan."

And why did He come among us? Because we had to have Him in just this human form—the lowly guise of a servant. Just because we are mortal and human, we never could have understood the divine Fatherhood—and seeing we are yet so dull, though nearly two thousand Christmases have come and gone, God knows we never could have understood—except through the Incarnation. I take it we are not very different, in original fiber and substance, from those lone Indians I heard Dr. E. R. Young, their great missionary, tell about. One missionary goes to the Indians and says: “Children of the Forest, I have come to tell you of the Great Jehovah, the white man’s God.” And the Indians reply: “Go your way, white man: we have the Great Spirit for our Father.” Another comes and says: “You Indians are sinners, thieves, rascals, liars! Quit your badness; be decent; be respectable; be Christians!” And the Indians answer: “Thou fool! return to your own land, white man; for you have plenty of scoundrels, thieves, and liars at home!” But another missionary says, in love’s broken, tearful syllables: “I have come to tell you of the Good Father, who came to earth in the likeness of a man. He lived, He walked, He worked, He talked like a man. And then, at last, He died for our sins!” And the venerable missionary said the Indians almost invariably make answer: “He is the God we will love and serve!”

Now, if there is anything that will draw out of

the human heart the desire to love and serve God, is it not just this: "He dwelt among us"? Two boys came to my study not long ago. One comes quite often, and without special invitation. The other I had never seen before. It turned out that my own boy had gone out into the street—or the byways, or the hedges, or somewhere else—and brought a boy home. So, when I opened my study door, I was greeted with: "Papa, here's my little friend!" I asked: "Where do you live, my boy?" "Oh, I live somewhere around in the big white houses!" You know it is just like some boys to be both indefinite and indifferent about their home! Home is to a healthy boy where fun and dirt are! Now, the boy—and this is what I am coming to—in introducing the strange laddie, used a great word, and not less great, mark you, because so common; for all truly great things and great men must have a vast amount of the common values and sentiments packed away in their natures. So I say the boy used a great, familiar word when he said: "Here's my friend." And this is the truth for which the Incarnation stands—the word which not only declares that God is man's friend, but that each man may become the friend of God: "Ye are My friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you."

And so, we had to have this homing of the Eternal God among us. The Incarnation is the jewel of revelation which the all-wise Father hath flashed from the deep mines of Eternity. Dr.

David Gregg told me about that matchless jewel in the crown room at Dresden. He says: "The jewel is a perfect silver egg. When the secret spring of the silver egg is pressed a golden yolk opens into view. When the spring of the yolk is pressed, a beautiful bird appears. When the spring in the wings of the bird is pressed, a matchless crown of precious gems falls into the hand. Each treasure includes a greater treasure." And the fleshing of the Word, the Incarnation, is the flaming jewel which God hath set in the Crown of Revelation. Nor can its beauty glitter for awhile, and then vanish, swallowed up in night. But the closer our humanity draws to this jewel, the more will its hidden riches continue to flash forth in undreamed splendours!

III

Consider, lastly, the Glory of the Word: "And we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth." Now, John is talking out of his own heart when he says: "We beheld His glory." Of course, a long bridge of centuries spans the gulf between Moses and John, but forget not that the old lawgiver also had his glory-dream: "Show me, I pray Thee, Thy glory." And God said to Moses: "I will make all My goodness pass before thee, but thou canst not see My face: for man shall not see Me and live."

Truly, when Absolute Deity goes flaming by, a man may well seek a pocket in the rock and a covering hand, and be satisfied with a glimpse of God's trailing garments, or else be burnt up! But while Moses visioned a fading theophany, a majestic abstraction, John beheld an incarnate and humanized Deity. He says: "That which was from the beginning, we heard, we saw, we beheld, we handled." And John might have added, "We pillowed," inasmuch as his head rested upon Christ's bosom, and his ear heard the beating of God's heart!

And where did you behold His glory, John? "Why, He took Peter, James, and me up into the mountain to pray. And as He was praying, the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment became white and dazzling. And behold, there talked with Him two men, which were Moses and Elijah; who appeared in glory, and spake of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. Now, Peter, James, and I were heavy with sleep: but when we were fully awake, we saw His glory, and the two men that stood with Him."

And where else, John, did you behold His glory? "It was in the isle of Patmos. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a great voice. And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And having turned I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the candlesticks one like unto a son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about at the breasts with

a golden girdle. And His head and His hair were white as white wool, white as snow; and His eyes were as a flame of fire; and His feet like unto burnished brass, as if it had been refined in a furnace; and His voice as the voice of many waters. And He had in His right hand seven stars: and out of His mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword: and His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as one dead. And He laid His right hand upon me, saying, Fear not; I am the first and the last, and the Living one; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and Hades. Indeed," says John, "I beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father."

Now, God can strike off worlds as a blacksmith strikes sparks from his anvil. And God has myriads of angels, archangels, cherubim and seraphim, who stood around His throne before the morning stars sang together, who were ancient when mountains, seas, and planets were young. But listen! God—just because He is God—has but one Eternal Son, "the only begotten from the Father," and, as the old Puritan said, He made Him to be a minister!

And what are those two great golden lamps that forever burn in the cathedral of His glory? The first is the Lamp of Grace: "The Word is full of grace." And Grace was once a heathen term. The

Romans spoke of a Grace, and the Greeks named her Charis, which is our New Testament word for grace. Also, in Grecian mythology, there were Three Graces, the goddesses of grace and charm, signifying joy, bloom, and brilliance. Now, Christianity took this heathen word Grace, and after washing it in the Water of Life, mellowing it with the music of Heaven, dipping it into the heart of God, and perfuming it with the sweetness of Paradise, Grace became a Christian Chariot drawn by Steeds of Love. And into this Chariot of Grace Christianity has packed all the mercies of our God, all the hopes of our race, all the joys of born and unborn saints, and started it rolling down the centuries with these immortal words graven upon it: "The Word is full of Grace." In short, all Grecian dreams of beauty, all Roman visions of glory, all that is lovely and pure and grand and holy—all these silver dewdrops of the human heart have been drunk up into the Sun of Righteousness, and John describes it by saying, "The Word is full of Grace!"

And the second lamp in the cathedral of His glory, what is that? John names it the Lamp of Truth: "The Word is full of Truth." Bishop Westcott has suggested that as Grace corresponds with the idea of the revelation of God as Love by Him who is Life, so Truth corresponds with that revelation of God as Light by Him who is Himself Light. "And this is the message which we have

heard and announce unto you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all."

Glory! Grace! Truth! Oh, what a Trinity! And here are Christianity's Three Graces! I was thrilled the other day by these words in Lowell's essay on Wordsworth: "Parnassus has two peaks: the one where improvising poets cluster; the other where the singer of deep secrets sits alone—a peak veiled sometimes from the whole morning of a generation by earth-born mists and smoke of kitchen fires, only to glow the more consciously at sunset, and after nightfall to crown itself with imperishable stars." And Truth, too, has two peaks: on one side of which men are strapped by the gossamer threads of variable opinions; on the other side sit the immovable giants of righteousness and justice, the prophets of that new morning whose advancing light is ever more fully irradiating the world. And they are the men of whom Jeremy Taylor says: "As a flame touches a flame and combines into splendour and glory, so is the spirit of a man united unto Christ by the Spirit of God. These are the friends of God and they best know God's mind; and they only that are so know how much such men do know. They have a special unction from above."

Let us, my friends, become Kings of Truth, Queens of Truth, by lighting our torches at the Lamp of The Truth! And it behooves us all the more to allow Him to complete His glorious work

in us, because the Incarnation means just this—that all the Highest Good in the universe has come our human way. And that Good has come this way—the way of time and the way of man—to lift up into His own eternal beauty the fallen ruins of our humanity, and to transmute those very ruins into spiritual gems to be set forever in the Crown of God, who shall be all in all. And the Crown of God is supremely, I think, a race of redeemed mortals and a transfigured world. Saint John writes of the visible beginning of our eternal redemption in these simple and august words: “And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth.”

V

“OUR DWELLING-PLACE”

“ Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations.”
—PSALM XC. I.

MY text is the first note in the majestic song that sings the eternity of God. And this first note, grand as it is, is but a wave in a sea of music whose rolling melody touches all shores of being. “Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever Thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God. Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men. For a thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.” That is to say, God’s being is not only endless, but it is yearless, it is ageless, it is timeless; the words by which we indicate duration having no meaning for Him.

Without following the Psalmist on through his august chant of the brevity of human life, traceable to human sin, or his lofty prayer for God’s return and satisfying mercy, we may say at once that this Ninetieth Psalm is an appropriate requiem for a

planet. But let us not linger too much on the dirge alone. Surely there is a dirge here, and the solemn grandeur of its stately music is in keeping with the hurried march of generations. But back of all human transiencies, back of the rise and fall of empires, back of the fleeting centuries, there is the living, loving, sheltering heart of God—humanity’s asylum, humanity’s dwelling-place. It is from this viewpoint, therefore, that the dirgelike chant sounds also a sublime pæan of praise for the immortal hope of the immortal humanity. So, while retaining the august solemnity, let us not lose the unspeakable joy of these words: “Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations.” Or, as Isaac Watts, that English-Hebrew Psalmist of the eighteenth century, paraphrases it:

“O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
And our eternal home!”

And so, my theme is, “Our Dwelling-Place.” For the purpose of illustrating our subject, I select three Scriptural passages, which are the keys, I think, that unlock the mystery and wonder of man’s temporal and eternal history. The first Scripture is First Samuel vii. 12: “Ebenezer Hitherto hath Jehovah helped us.” The second is Saint Matthew i. 23: “Emmanuel God with us.” The third is Genesis xxii. 14: “Jehovah-jireh The Lord will provide.” We have in these

passages the explanation of the past, the security of the present, and the confidence of the future. Let us study them in order.

I

The Explanation of the Past: "Ebenezer . . . Hitherto hath Jehovah helped us." A victory had been won by Israel over the lords of the Philistines. Then Samuel, the prophet-statesman and man of God, set up a memorial stone between Mizpah and Shen. And that stone did not commemorate the prowess of Israel, but the providential help of God, for it signified "the stone of help."

We are here reminded, first, of the "hitherto" of a nation's past. Poor, indeed, is that nation that has no Ebenezers, no stones of help, set up along its national pathway! Our Washington's and Lincoln's birthdays, our Decoration Day, our Fourth of July, our Labour Day—these are some of the Ebenezers of our own dear land. And surely if any nation can say, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us," it is America. Let us not be ashamed to confess it, my friends. Let us rather be ashamed if we forget to confess it before God and nations. If the hand of Almighty God is not the explanation of our national past, then history is, indeed, as Napoleon said, a fable about which men are agreed, and not the orderly unfolding of God's ripening plans through the ages.

Moreover, there is the grand “hitherto” of the Christian Church. When man fell, he fell into a cradle, and that Cradle was the Church of God. And beyond the gates of Eden, the Cradle rocked him. It rocked him in Ur of the Chaldees. It rocked him amid the sighing and sobbing of Egypt. It rocked him amid the murmurings of the Wilderness. It rocked him amid the Promised Land. It rocked him amid the sinful splendours of Babylon. It rocked him amid the gilded iniquity of Nineveh. It rocked him amid the classic idolatry of Greece. It rocked him amid the cruelty of pagan Rome. It rocked him among the cave-men of old Britain. It rocked him amid the sound of wintry seas that broke upon Plymouth Rock, the first granite step upon that solid stairway leading up to God’s New Promised Land—“the land of the free, and the home of the brave.” And Heaven’s Cradle is still rocking God’s home-bound prodigals amid the weal and woe, the joy and sorrow, the triumph and tragedy of the twentieth century! Oh, Church of the Living God, pillar and ground of the truth, here is the explanation of thy struggling, suffering, crimson, rugged, victorious past: “Ebenezer Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.”

“One family we dwell in Him,
One church, above, beneath,
Though now divided by the stream,
The narrow stream of death:

One army of the living God,
 To His command we bow;
 Part of His host have crossed the flood,
 And part are crossing now."

Furthermore, there is that strange "hitherto" of your own individual past. There come to all of us, as to Saint Augustine, times when we seem to hear the roar of Eternity thundering behind our little past named Time. And like that epoch-making man and saint, we, too, feel like asking questions, believing, with Socrates, that if "in another world they do not put a man to death for asking questions," we ought to introduce something of that heavenly charity in this. And Saint Augustine, after speaking of that infancy when he "received the comforts of woman's milk," asks this question: "Say, Lord, to me, Thy suppliant; say, all-pitying, to me, Thy pitiable one; say, did my infancy succeed another age of mine that died before it? And what before that life again, oh God of my joy, was I any where or any body? For this I have none to tell me, neither father nor mother, nor experience of others, nor mine own memory."

And then, fifteen centuries later—for truth and spirit know not the change of centuries—William Wordsworth, that holy, calm, majestic soul, wrapped in his golden robes of song, climbed the immortal peaks and sang once again the same truth held by the fourth century saint:

“Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
The soul that rises with us, our life's star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar;
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home:
Heaven lies about us in our infancy!
Shades of the prison-house begin to close
Upon the growing boy,
But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,
He sees it in his joy;
The youth, who daily farther from the east
Must travel, still is Nature's priest,
And by the vision splendid
Is on his way attended;
At length the man perceives it die away,
And fade into the light of common day.”

But it is still true that—

“ in a season of calm weather,
Though inland far we be,
Our souls have sight of that immortal sea
Which brought us hither;
Can in a moment travel thither,—
And see the children sport upon the shore,
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.”

Oh, my friends, seeing that God hath enclosed us in an eternal past of goodness and an eternal future of glory, shall we not here and now set up a new memorial stone in the temple of our being—a stone which commemorates past pardons, past mercies, past hopes, past victories—and say,
“Ebenezer Hitherto hath Jehovah helped us.”

II

Consider, that the second truth of our dwelling-place includes the security of the present: "Emmanuel God with us." The explanation of the past, invaluable as it is, is not enough for men sinning, suffering, toiling in the present. And so God came and dwelt among us. To make this truth absolutely plain, Christ was born and cradled in a manger. But that was twenty centuries ago, and the symbol of the future blessed reincarnation of Christ in every obedient life. What God demands now is that cradle named the human heart, that the Holy Spirit may dwell as the Eternal Christ within it. And this is the only security—peace, hope, love, joy, and victory—of the present: "Emmanuel . God with us," or, better still, God in us!

Now here, I think, is a fact worth noting: While there are historians who can reconstruct the past, and prophets who can forecast the future, altogether too rare are the men who can understand God's goings in the present. And yet His chariots are going furiously, tremendously, all the time. It may be that their flaming wheels raise so many clouds of golden dust that we are dazzled, and have to wait until the chariots have disappeared and the splendour has faded, before we can clearly see that God hath been abroad in the national and international highways. Yet He is abroad to-day, ful-

filling the prophet's statement that “the government shall be upon His shoulder.”

What mean these extraordinary movements among the peoples? Never again will the German Emperor exercise his old-time power. The recent protest of the Reichstag was but the conscious or unconscious uprising of the people, proclaiming: “Emmanuel!” And when God comes among a people, tyrannical individuals are bound to go down while humanity goes up. Think of Turkey having the ballot! Think of China already being promised a Constitution and a Parliament! And the Mikado, how has he increased his authority? Why, by vesting more and more of his power in the Japanese common people! The following words from a writer of current history—history being made before our very eyes—give us something to think over: “For six thousand years government has moved in a circle—first an absolute despotism, then a limited monarchy, then a democracy, and then anarchy—to be followed by a despotic revival again. It looks now as though the wheel had stopped, and that a democracy is not to be followed by anarchy and a return to despotism; that the representative form of government is the one to which all nations are tending, and at which all nations are likely to stop.”

All of which means that, strictly speaking, there is no such thing as a progressive Christianity. In the fulness of time, God unveiled Himself in

Christ Jesus. There is no progress beyond that revelation, because in Him dwells the fulness of the God-head.* Now, there is, on the contrary, in very deed a progressive humanity—that is, as individuals grasp the eternal, unchanged and unchangeable truths of the Christ, humanity is lifted toward those vast and lofty zones of being where God Himself is sun and moon!

Now, it is quite possible for a man to believe in God's present forward movements among the nations, and yet be a no better man himself. You know a man may be good and very brilliant, and he may be very brilliant, and not good at all. What is God's message to him? Just this—that he may be able to say with Paul: "It hath pleased God to reveal His Son *in me*." I think it is true that the animal and the angel live within every soul. In some, of course, the jungle is denser, deeper, blacker, and the animal is more savage and vicious. In others, the angel may be stronger, whiter, purer, more ready for revealing. But in both, the better and the worse, it is unerringly true that only the divine Christ, who forms Himself within the soul, can make the animal decreasingly less and the angel increasingly more. Thus shall both animal and angel come at last to the holy estate of a new manhood and a re-created womanhood in Christ Jesus!

I have heard a famous philosopher quoted as saying: "The stability of the universe depends upon

experience.” And the philosopher does not mean that our spirits are in any sense akin to star dust, rocks, and seas, but that man’s spirit is united unto Christ by the Spirit of God, who changeth not, though He may fold up the universe, like a time-worn garment that has dropped its stars and suns as so many jewels and spangles, and lay it away in the ample wardrobes of Eternity. Listen to the supernal harper: “Of old hast Thou laid the foundations of the earth: and the heavens are the work of Thy hands. They shall perish, but Thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt Thou change them, and they shall be changed; but Thou art the same, and Thy years shall have no end.” So much for God’s eternity: now listen to man’s eternity, through God: “The children of Thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before Thee.” Ah! my Christian brethren, our only security for the present is this: “Emmanuel . . . God with us!”

III

We have, finally, in our study, the Confidence of the Future: “Jehovah-jireh . . . The Lord will provide.” The words take us back to the far-off dawns of human history. The scene is one of the grandest in the annals of our race. The man is Abraham, clothed in his glowing robe of faith, trudging along the shadowy ways which bring him

at last to the Mount of God. And Abraham stamped that mountain with a name that will outlast the mountain itself: "Jehovah-jireh . . . The Lord will provide."

No matter what the unrevealed future may hold, my friends, here is the secret of a calm and cheerful confidence. I think this old story is as fresh and fragrant as if it had been acted out but yesterday. Because it is all dewy with the morning of eternity, Abraham's trust in our souls' dwelling-place gives a rich morning-glow to our life in the twentieth century. Consider three aspects of his life:

1. Abraham was lonely. All high grandeur of spirit knows the spell of loneliness. Sometime in the deep night the voice of God sounded in the patriarch's soul: "Take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest, even Isaac, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of." Reading the account, one can almost feel the solemn loneliness, the unbroken stillness that enwrapped him. And it is just this august solitude that makes him the true twin brother of my spirit and yours. We enter the world alone; we live in it almost entirely alone; we leave the world alone; we shall be judged and rewarded or punished alone.

Ah! but having said this, I have told you only half the truth. Abraham was not alone, and you

and I are not alone. A Greater than Abraham said: “Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave Me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.” And what He possessed for Himself, Christ doth not withhold in blessing from His disciple. I saw a lonely, frightened child the other day down at the Flatbush Avenue station. The mother had left it in its carriage and gone away for a moment. And the roar of the elevated trains, the noise of the trolley cars, the rattle of the trucks, the rushing, jostling crowds—the little creature was dreadfully frightened by these confusing things. Going up to the carriage, I said: “What’s the matter, dearie? Do you want your Mamma?” Oh, then you should have seen her baby face! Though a total stranger to the child, when I said “Mamma”! her smiles coined her tears into liquid jewels of joy. Of course! If Mamma were there, how could trains and trolleys and trucks and crowds frighten a baby to tears? And this is the music I hear breaking out of God’s heart: “Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, these may forget, yet will not I forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me.”

2. Again: Abraham was the soldier of mystery. He was the ancient knight that braved the thick shadows cloaking our humanity. He not only went

to prove his soul, but he proved the unprovable. God was the geometrician, life the theorem, and Abraham's sublime faith commanded the blessing of both. Mr. Huxley declared that life is a game, the chessboard is the world, the pieces are the phenomena of the universe, the rules of the game are the laws of nature, and while his play is always fair, just, and patient, the Player on the other side is hidden from us. But, happily, before Huxley was, Abraham forever is, and he always comes down from the Mount of Mystery saying: "Jehovah-jireh The Lord will provide."

And we, too, are soldiers of mystery. But we are also prophets of glory. Because the Lord is our dwelling-place, we say with Epictetus: "I am a soul dragging about a corpse." With Spinoza, the God-intoxicated man, we gladly confess: "In knowledge and love the eternal already lives in us." Therefore, I am positive of this—that over against our little clouds of doubt, there flame the steady, diamond suns of Faith, Hope, and Love, those out-flashings of God into hearts that cradle the Eternal Son, those spiritual revealings set within the White Stone, which God gives His lovers, faithful, pure, and true!

And just because we are soldiers of mystery and prophets of glory, we must be more forgiving, more tender, more sympathetic. We must learn to place fewer flowers upon human graves and more smiles upon human faces. We botanize entirely too much

on human graves. Let us, rather, lay our flowers upon the fevered brows and aching bosoms of the living. Lifeless dust knows not the perfume of flowers, however rich and beautiful. And the immortal spirit, after it hath passed into that Morning Land which opens unto the gate of death, needs not the poor flowers grown in the gardens of earth. For the immortelles of Paradise carpet the very walks of the soul's "ain countrie." We need to hear, and heed the pathetic sermon Mrs. Browning preached from Cowper's grave:

"O poets! from a maniac's tongue was poured the deathless
singing!

O Christians! at your cross of hope a hopeless hand was
clinging!

O men! this man in brotherhood your weary paths beguiling,
Groaned inly while he taught you peace, and died while ye
were smiling!"

3. Abraham was growing old. Two chapters later we read: "And Abraham was old, and well stricken in age: and the Lord had blessed Abraham in all things." And we are all growing old—the babe in the cradle just as truly as the pilgrim on his staff. The moments tick away to the heart-throbs of the child just as surely as to the pulse-beats of the man. For all alike, Time's noisy river is set toward the golden deeps of the Eternal Sea. And it is just here that my text widens out into a mansion whose roof is higher than the stars, and whose foundations are laid deep in the heart of God:

"Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations"!

Here, then, is a clarion call to the forward life. On December 31, 1907, I congratulated a dear old friend—a splendid Christian business man—upon reaching the last day of the old year. Then I wished him a prosperous New Year, adding: "And I trust you may have many more of them." "Oh, don't say that," he said, and there was a dewy moisture in his eye and a velvet music in his voice. "Don't say that. In these days, I'm not looking backward—I'm looking forward. I'm afraid there'd be little satisfaction in gazing at the past, but a mighty hope stirs my being as I look to the future." A man like that can never grow old, my friends. His body may decay, but the man carries within him a springing, gushing fountain of youth!

And here is a call to the ripening life. If it is unnatural to see green apples in midsummer, it is tragical to see sour, green, unripened souls growing in the orchards of life. Ah! what nobler reality than a ripening man or woman! A successful man—the president of a concern doing sixty millions of business a year—was recently telling me of his boyhood days. He still retains, practically unchanged, the country home in which he grew up. He often tells his grown daughters of the happy times when he picked huckleberries for ten cents a day. And then he told me that one of the un-

fading pictures of his manhood's years was this: His father-in-law, a retired minister eighty-seven years of age, came to live in his home. He says he has often stood watching the old minister and his own six-year-old daughter wander, hand in hand, over the fields together. It seemed as if humanity's spring and winter had clasped hands and were off on a stroll, over God's carpet of green and under God's dome of blue. And which side of the lovely picture is the more beautiful, it were hard to tell. You know it takes a dawn to make a sunset, and there could be no perfected dawn without a completed sundown. As the evening drinks up the splendour of morn and noontide, so age picks up the jewels of youth and maturity and sets them in its diamond crown, upon which God's finger writes: "In the beauties of holiness, from the womb of the morning, thou hast the dew of thy youth."

And here, also, is a call to the fearless life. "Oh," but you say, "what about death? Shall I not fear death?" I answer: Christianity knows no death, except the death of sin. "The death of life!"—why, that is coming to be an absurdity to science. But it was always so to Jesus Christ. The New Testament is packed to bursting with life. It flows and thrills and tingles with life—life, abundant life! The other day I entered a subway train in New York. And before I was aware, I had come under the East River and was surprised

to hear the guard call: "Borough Hall!" Now, I had come through a real, dark, horrible tunnel. And yet all the while I had sat there reading a volume of Frederick D. Maurice, quite unconscious that I was in a tunnel at all. And why? Because I was in a strongly built coach of an electric train, and the forces of electricity, gravitation, and human genius were making it comfortable for me.

And there was once a tunnel named Death. But it has been abolished. Now it is only a vanishing shadow, through which the Gospel chariots, lit up with life and immortality, and cushioned with love, race toward the Old Homestead of Heaven. While I expect to pass through the valley one of these days, and while I expect to behold many wonders while passing through and at the end, I have no idea whatever of seeing death. For my Captain, my King, my Guide says: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, if a man keep My word, he shall never see death."

Candidly, therefore, I can see no reason why I, or any other Christian, should go through the world dreading a shadow, any more than I should look up at the sky and fear a cloud whose edges are indeed shot with gold, but which owes its very being to the flaming sun! Rather, will I sing the song of Home: "Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations"! Rather, will I sing the explanation of the past: "Ebenezer . . . Hith-

erto hath Jehovah helped us”! Rather, will I sing the security of the present: “Emmanuel . . . God with us”! Rather, will I sing the confidence of the future: “Jehovah-jireh . . . The Lord will provide”!

VI

THE GREAT LIFE

"His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord."—
ST. MATTHEW XXV. 21.

THE three men in the parable of the talents are old acquaintances. Their faces, their words, their attitudes are quite familiar. They are contemporary men. We meet them in the street, in the shop, in the counting room, in the home, in the Church—everywhere! Contemporary men, they have also lived in every age. They were back there in the gray dawns of history, they loomed large in the days of Christ, they are still with us. They are as constant as the stars that never set, as the mountains that never move, as the tides that never forget to ebb and flow.

And it is just this that makes them so instructive. They are not unreal men, whose images flashed across the Master's mind only to be forever stamped upon His unfading picture. No! They are real, live human beings. They jostle us in the market place, they crowd us in the trolley cars, they meet

and greet us in our drawing rooms and churches. The five-talent man, the two-talent man, the one-talent man; or, the extraordinary man, the average man, the mediocre man—ah, no! they are not strangers, but everyday companions.

Now, this parable impresses me as being nothing more nor less than Christ's estimate and analysis of a great life. He here sets forth the definition, the elements, the remuneration, and the joy of a truly great life.

I

Consider, first, Christ's definition of a great life: "Well done." And this definition throbs with a *positive* greatness. It is great in its reality. It goes straight home to the heart. It reveals the very soul of truth. It is devoid of rhetorical adornment. It makes verbal jewelry seem tawdry. "Well done"! There it stands in its commanding reality. We cannot add anything to it, we cannot subtract anything from it, we cannot improve it, we cannot even approach it. It sets the mind afire, it sets the heart to singing, it sets the spirit to soaring. It fits in with the foundations of the universe, it harmonizes with the movements of worlds, it answers to the majesty of God, who is the one reality of man's spirit.

Moreover, the definition is great in its simplicity. A philosopher would ask at least a hundred words to define a great life. A poet would perhaps de-

mand as many more. A statesman could hardly get along with a less number. But Christ takes the philosopher's hundred, the poet's hundred, the statesman's hundred, drops at least ninety-eight, substitutes two words which may have been altogether absent from their reckonings, and writes a definition which is well-nigh overpowering in its simplicity. "Well done"! Fournier names his latest book, "Two New Worlds." It is a study of the infra-world and the supra-world—a theory of the wonders of electrons and stars, a mathematical survey of the infinitesimal and the infinite. Now, here are two words that hold more wonders than two worlds. Here is the ultimate pronouncement of God and His universe upon the highest attainment of the human spirit. "Well done"! Why, these two monosyllables threaten to dazzle us by their simplicity, to blind us by their glory, for they flame upon us like a sun!

Also, the definition is great in its abiding vitality. Some worthful statements have a fluctuating value. They mean much in one age, they mean practically nothing in another. They wore true countenances at one time. Now they seem to be masquerading with false faces. Like worlds, definitions have their birth, life, and death. But not so the Master's definition of a great life. "Well done" has a permanent, pregnant vitality. It is not a victim of the disease called ancient, mediæval, or modern history. It is as fresh as spring, as luminous

as noonday, as restful as sleep, as vigorous as health, as lusty as March winds, as unwithering as love, as boundless as life. Truly, "well done" has a positive greatness—great in its reality, great in its simplicity, great in its abiding vitality!

But, mark you, the definition holds also a *negative* greatness. It is almost as remarkable for what it does not say as for what it does say. Christ does not say a great life is brilliant. He does not say a great life is splendid. He does not say a great life is illustrious. He does not say a great life is heroic. A great life is all these and more, but Christ does not say so. He simply says a great life is one upon which the Lord of the Soul can ultimately stamp: "Well done!" It is an illustration of God's self-restraint, which Professor Nash calls "the spring-head of wonder." "God's restraint is as deep as His being and power." And so, there is a divine restraint, a negative greatness in Christ's definition of a great life.

In short, here is a phrase that will do duty when other phrases are quite empty. You have read how the blizzards sweep over the far West. Among those who suffer most are the herders, the sheep, and the cattle. Usually, the herders are lonely men, their closest companions being the noble shepherd dogs. One aged herder owned a dog that could do almost anything but talk. Sometime ago, after a blizzard, the old herder's dog, with two legs frozen, dragged himself into a little sheep town.

And the citizens understood the shepherd's fate at once. So, they concluded to wait until the effects of the blizzard had passed before going in search of his body. But no! Shep, with two legs as stiff as sticks, was eager to go back to his master's side. And the frozen dog led the party over snow-capped hills and snow-carpeted valleys to the old man's snowy grave. Then the dog, thin as a shadow, gaunt from hunger and pain, crouched down by the side of his master's body, uttered a piteous wail, licked the old shepherd's dead face, and died. And I think those sturdy Westerners did an appropriate thing when they buried the herder and his dog in the same grave. While I do not believe the nature of the lower animals demands immortality, yet I feel quite sure that only these words are worthy of framing Shep's epitaph: "Well done"!

II

Consider, also, the elements of a great life: "Good and faithful servant." The first element is goodness. And how fundamental goodness is, is self-evident. Men do not fail for lack of capacity. They were capable yesterday, they are capable to-day, they will be capable to-morrow. Our prisons are filled with talented men. Brilliant scoundrels are found in the halls of philosophy. Learned scamps are found in the laboratories of science. Gilded rakes are found at the forefront

of literature. Eloquent Judases are not unknown in the pulpit. Men do not fail now, they have never failed, because of dulness. What, then, is the source of their undoing, their individual misery, their baneful example? Just this: They are strangers to goodness. The angel of goodness has wooed, but not won them. The tongue of goodness has called, and they have answered not. They prefer the circumference to the centre of life. They would rather dabble in the shallows than dwell in the deeps.

And what is goodness? Why, goodness is of God. "And God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good." How could it be otherwise? The universe was conceived in goodness, brought forth in goodness, is sustained in goodness. God is good, the Christ of God went about doing good, and His forthstreaming goodness is still making bad men good. Ah! goodness is the great matter, my brothers. Not goody-goodyness, but goodness, unweariable as God, patient as motherhood, fragrant as love, high as heaven, deeper than hell. Goodness will outlast greatness. Goodness will outwear genius. Goodness will outshine gold. Goodness will outweigh grandeur. Of course, the Master made goodness the first element of a great life!

The second element is fidelity. "Faithful!" It is well to remark just here that the differing capacities of the three men in the parable are all but

lost sight of in the ultimate estimate of Christ. True, they had varying abilities, but they are not rewarded or condemned according to their "several ability." Rather, it is the use they made of their talents that Christ emphasizes. In two instances, the talents flowered into goodness and fidelity. In the third, the man used the talent for transforming himself into a grave-digger. "I went and hid Thy talent in the earth." And in that moment he buried not only the talent, but himself!

Fidelity! What a twin-brother for goodness! And he is just the brother we need. He will not run away from the job. Truth to tell, he is not a good runner at all. Having done all, he stands! Stands when the storms beat down! Stands when the heat swelters! Stands when the humdrum tasks seem to mock! Stands when the siren winds of prosperity sing! No spurter, no pace-maker is he, but a stubborn, magnificent stander! One faithful, loyal soul is of more value to a church, to a business, to a home, than a dozen rapid starters-and-stoppers!

My friends, our Lord is not suffering for great leaders. He never did suffer for great leaders. When He needs men for leadership, He produces them. No! Christ never suffers for great leaders. He has suffered, He is suffering to-day, for faithful followers—men who will agree to be Christ-men all the time, everywhere! And the only source of relief for His great pain is souls

filled with the glory of fidelity. A boy asked his mother what a hero was. To make it plain, the mother said: "Now, suppose you were a man, and a little boy about your size should fall into the river. Hearing his cries for help, if you should leap into the river and save him, then you would be a hero." Just at this point I entered the room (for it was my own wife and boy who were talking) and said: "What your mother has told you is quite true, my boy. But perhaps we may find a hero nearer home. Now, a real hero is a boy about five years of age, who, when his parents speak to him, obeys them at once." The boy's tongue was silent, but his face did the talking, and it very emphatically said: "Oh, fudge on such a hero!"

Let us be careful not to laugh too loud at the boy. There may be other possible heroes nearer home! One of the pastimes of this same lad is to come into my study, take a pair of scissors, and cut waste paper into very small pieces. One of the rules of the game is that he must clean up the litter from the floor. Recently, after making a worse muss than usual, a wandering thought suddenly entered his mind, and he started off on a run to another part of the house. I hailed him, reminding him that he must gather up the pieces of paper. The idea did not strike him very favourably at first. However, he consented, and there were three steps in the process: First, he seized a broom and swept everywhere in the room but the spot where the

paper lay. Second, he looked at, and then came a little nearer, the object of his dodgings. Third, he picked up a shovel and attempted to shovel up bits of paper that almost refused a broom. That was too much for me, and I went to his relief.

Now, don't say the child was not in earnest, for he was. There were drops of perspiration on his cheeks, but they only emphasized his misspent energy. The paper was still on the floor. Now, being a man (of course women have a better way), the only way I know of getting fine pieces of paper from a carpeted floor is just to get down on your hands and knees and pick them up, one by one. And being a typesetter, I know it is a more delicate task than setting type. But hear me! The only way—there is no second, and there is no patent on it—of adorning the House of Life is by picking up the thousand and one golden fidelities along our journey, until at last we shall be worthy to stand before the Son of Man, when He Himself shall set the glorious crown of fidelity upon our brows and say: "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Now, this element of fidelity has its setting between a principle and a promise in the New Testament. The principle is thus stated: "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much." The principle must be practised before the promise can be fulfilled. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown

of life." Not faithful for a few weeks, a few months, or a few years, but faithful through all the years. And then, when we shall seem to have fallen on death, we shall be caught up by the angel of life, to live forevermore!

Most of us fail after having made a good start. "Ay, there's the rub!" One sees it painfully illustrated in Sunday School work. Boys and girls are nourished in the Sunday School, are taught the principles of a true life, and then we wake up one day to discover that they have stopped coming altogether. I say to a mother, "Where's your son? Where's your daughter? They are not in the Bible School any more." "Oh," she says, "they used to go, but they are too old now." Too old? Have they outgrown the truth of Christ? What were they taught for, if not to become teachers and workers? Too old! Rather, have they stopped before being well started in the Way! It is not a brilliant start that counts, my friends, but a faithful ending! That is why it behooves men and women in the thirties, in the forties, in the fifties, in the sixties, yea, in the seventies, to be more watchful, more energetic, more enthusiastic in the service of Christ and His little ones! For, of course, it is in the very nature of things that goodness and fidelity must find their expression, their outlet, their practical justification for being, through the avenues of service. We are saved from sin to serve, we are not saved in sin to sit. And it is

unquestionably true that no man is deeply saved until he truly serves.

III

We have, in the third place, the remuneration of a great life: "Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things." I do not need to be told that this is God's speech. It is so big, so vast, so spacious, so grand, that I know no other but God's tongue could have said it. It is so utterly unlike man, so majestically like God. Why, man would have said: "Good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over *many* things, I will set thee over a *few* things." But God comes walking down the immensities and says: "He has done a little—reward him infinitely. He has given a crumb—give him the Bread of Life. He has given a cup of water in My name—give him the Crystal Sea in return. He has given a few rags to My naked ones—give him the white raiment of Heaven. He has visited the sick—give him the Country where health abounds. He has visited the prisoner—deed him a mansion for eternity. He has spoken a kind word to the heartbroken—give him the music room where angels will draw it out in song forever."

Ah! the littleness of man is that he asks so much and gives so little. But the greatness of God is that He asks so little and gives so much. A missionary left a few pages of the Gospel in an Indian village.

Swifter than the arrows he shot from his bow, the message went straight to an Indian's heart. Meantime, the missionary had travelled on some two hundred miles. But the Indian measured the missionary's footprint, made him a fine pair of moccasins, tracked him over hill and valley until he found him, and gave him the tokens of his gratitude. God always takes the measure of His servant's footprint. And though he travel never so far and never so lonely, God will overtake him—no, not that, God will go with him, God will sing to him, God will cheer him, God will rest him, God will comfort him, God will richly reward him! Oh, yes, God's remunerations are incalculable! For brass He gives gold, for iron He gives silver, for stones He gives iron, for a few things He gives many things!

And yet there is nothing mechanical, nothing arbitrary, in God's methods of remuneration. I find in this very chapter—as I find throughout the Book—that the universe is in thorough harmony with its Creator in this matter. “For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken away.” The sun that gives light shall be able to give more light. The star that refuses to shine shall not be able to shine. The bird that does not try its wings to-day cannot fly to-morrow. The child that does not learn to walk in the nursery shall not be able to walk on the street. The man who uses his brain shall have

more brain. The man who does not use his brain shall have no brain to use. The man who has a little faith shall have more faith, or else he shall have none. The sacrificial heart must become more sacrificial, or degenerate into selfishness. And these are not arbitrary, wooden rules that can be kept or broken, as one pleases or displeases. They are the laws of God, the laws of the soul, the laws of the universe.

“But,” you say, “I thought we were not living under law, but under grace.” And you are quite right, my friend. Only, you are also quite wrong, if you mean that grace has no laws, that grace is lawless. Now, grace has no favourites, but it has many laws. Grace is like the summer ocean that calls to the bather; but the bather must go in, or there might just as well be no ocean, so far as his bathing is concerned. Grace is like the light of noonday; but you must open your eyes to see it. Grace is like music that beats on the ear-drum; but you must listen to hear it. Grace is like the purity of God; but it takes a pure heart to behold it. Grace is like the love of motherhood; but it takes a loving child to appreciate it. Grace is Heaven and Heaven is grace; but grace must get into and redeem a life before the life can feel at home in Heaven! So far as you and I are concerned, grace is not grace until it is appropriated. The redemptive effectiveness of the laws of grace may be summed up in two words—Love and Obedience! Then

doth the soul have a foretaste of the remunerative wealth of a great life: "Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things."

IV

Finally, here is the joy of a great life: "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." As if he had said: "You have the passwords, goodness and fidelity. The door is open! Go in! The joy of thy Lord is yours forever and ever!"

But before we reach the joy, my brethren, we must coin the passwords into Christian character. We do not forget for one moment that our hope is primarily the Atonement of Jesus Christ. We cannot improve on Calvary, and we cannot add one jot or one tittle to Calvary's ultimatum: "It is finished"! But we can and must prove our love for the Christ of Calvary by being good and faithful servants. We must have the passwords, or we shall not be able to enter into the joy of our Lord. Indelibly impressed upon my memory is a scene that occurred at the Central Congregational Church. It was at the close of Gipsy Smith's meetings in this city. The Gipsy was to tell the story of his life in his well-known lecture. And it looked from the crowds about Central Church as if all Brooklyn wanted to hear that lecture. But many of us had failed to get tickets in advance. I was one of the ticketless number, hoping to get in by a streak

of good luck. And, of course, we crowded as close as possible to the doorkeeper. Let me say at once that if I never see that doorkeeper again, I expect to see him in Heaven, as one of Saint Peter's first assistants. Now, there was one gentleman who, having no ticket, tried to pass the doorkeeper by the gentle art of persuasion. But the doorkeeper kindly, but firmly, answered: "My good friend, if you haven't a ticket, you can't come in here." "Why," replied the man, "I must come in. I am chairman of a committee, representing the city of Richmond, Virginia, and we've come hundreds of miles to hear the Gipsy, and then to invite him to go to our city and lead us in a great evangelistic campaign." And then that good and faithful doorkeeper made answer: "I am sorry for you, my friend, but I can't help it. Listen to me: If you were King of England or President of the United States, you should not enter this door without a ticket. If, after every ticket-holder has a seat, there is still room, you may come in, but not until then."

And what was I doing all this time? Why, I was meekly standing there thinking of the judgment, sympathizing with the man from Richmond, and admiring that doorkeeper. I think every man that heard the conversation, if he was not entirely destitute of the sense of justice, was bound to confess that the doorkeeper, severe as his duty was, was right, and grandly right. Now, making due

allowance for its inadequacy to completely embody a great truth, the incident tells us that we must have the passwords to enter into the joy of our Lord. Asked on one occasion if there are few that be saved, He said: "Strive (struggle, agonize) to enter in by the narrow door: for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able."

But I am persuaded better things of you, my brothers. I am persuaded that you are entering already into the purity, the peace, the power, the service, the love, the joy of your Lord. I cannot describe that joy. It is something to be experienced rather than described. As the rose defines the bush, as the music interprets the musician, as the pure face explains the pure heart behind it, so, in some such way, doth God's joy in the soul sing of the God who created the soul in His own image. I sometimes think that we have a hint of that joy when God and the soul understand each other in Christ. This picture from life may help us just here. There are in the parsonage two boys between five and six years of age. They are cousins; they are healthy; they are selfish; they are strenuous. You know the rest. The other night, after returning from a preaching engagement in a distant part of the city, I walked up to the bed on which the two lads lay, sound asleep. And the picture that met my eyes was so lovely that I walked away and back again for the third time. There they lay, cheek to cheek, heart to heart, hand in hand, even

breathing in perfect unison, folded in the calm and sweet embrace of slumber. Long hours before, they had forgotten their scratched faces. Long hours before, they had forgotten the toys that caused so much misunderstanding. Long hours before, they had forgotten the unkind words they did not mean. Long hours before, they had forgotten their little heartaches and dried their childish tears. Long hours before, they had climbed the white, dreamful hills of sleep, where tearful eyes become tearless, where stormy words melt into peace, where broken toys and broken hearts are mended, where God's angels brood above restful pillows!

And so, men and women, there is one place—more tranquil than childhood's sleep, more wonderful than childhood's dreams!—where our souls may find whiteness, where our minds may find unity and poise, where our hearts may find forgiveness, where our hot brows may find coolness. And that place is the bosom of Jesus Christ. In Him, through whom Jehovah is reconciling the world unto Himself, the soul and its God come to a perfect understanding. Then are set in motion those deepening currents of joy which will flood us at last into that infinite ocean named "the joy of thy Lord"!

Oh, brothers, let us try to be worthy of Life's Well-Done! Let us henceforward live out the Master's definition of a great life; blend the Mas-

ter's elements of a great life; receive the Master's remuneration of a great life; enter into the Master's joy of a great life. Let us remember, with Robert Louis Stevenson: "Our business in the world is not to succeed, but to continue to fail in good spirits; and, when the end comes, to be content with this epitaph, Here lies one who meant well, tried a little, and failed much; or, There goes another faithful failure." But let us remember, also, that with our Christ there is no end, and there are no faithful failures! Let His own majestic words set forth the grandeur of the truly great life: "Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

VII

THE GOAL OF PRAYER

“For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray and make request for you, that ye may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, to walk worthily of the Lord unto all pleasing, bearing fruit in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.”—COL. i. 9, 10 (R. V.).

“**T**HANKSGIVING for their attainments and prayer for their progress,”—that is the substance of the apostle’s thought. He has heard, through Epaphras, that the Colossian disciples are growing in the mightiest of all growths—growth in grace. The news thrills Paul to the depths of his great nature. He is beside himself with satisfaction. A hearty wave of holy joy rolls through his soul. “Why,” he seems to say, “when Epaphras told me of your love in the Spirit, I sat down and wept for joy. This thin old frame trembled with emotion. I was shaken by storms of spiritual laughter.”

And then he adds: “For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray and make request for you.” Do we pray like that? Paul’s Christian life was a ceaseless prayer. Just as your

lungs inhale the atmosphere, so this man drew deep and constant draughts out of the upper airs of spiritual communion. Like his Lord, Paul won his battles in prayer. Mark you, he did not pray and then go out to fight the battle. No! He struggled, he wrestled, he triumphed in prayer, and then went out to receive the victory. And I do not wonder that prayer was Paul's real battlefield. Visiting his great prayer-battlefields, what do you hear? You hear sobs and shouts and groans. You hear entreaties, intercessions, supplications. You hear laughter through tears, and tears through laughter. You hear songs that might have been sung by an angel. You hear wails that might have issued from the souls of the lost. You hear pleadings that might have come from the heart of motherhood. You hear scorching indignations that might have flamed from the tongue of outraged innocence. Supplications and thanksgivings and intercessions and principalities and powers and heights and depths and angels and men and God—all are active on Paul's prayer-battlefields. Just one thing, I find, is conspicuous by its absence—and that is defeat. There are no black flags waving over the spot where this man bent his knees before Almighty God. I find there no soft and silken oratories, no rose gardens; but mountainsides mutilated by wrestlings, battlefields ploughed by strugglings, and always the flag of victory waving in the holy winds of Heaven.

My subject is, "The Goal of Prayer." I am aware that the goal Paul sets before us is an exalted one. We shall hardly reach it. But let us make a start. If we fall, the hand of God's good grace will catch us up, and He will set us on the quest once again.

I

Knowing God's Will: "That ye may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding." Is it possible for a soul to know God's will? And if possible, is it desirable? Here is our problem.

Now, Paul evidently believed that every human spirit may have a special, individual knowledge of the will of God. Of course, God's will for the race has its final and complete manifestation in Christ Jesus. But what I am urging now is that every human being, by the grace of God in the Son of His Love, may have personal, distinct fellowship with the Eternal Father. I was somewhat surprised to hear a minister, now over seventy years of age, say that he could depend upon the guidance of the Holy Spirit only in a general way. If he is right, then I am quite wrong in my reading of the New Testament. That a man may have personal relations with God—relations as personal and separate as if there were no other beings save God and his own soul—seems to be one of the majestic commonplaces of the Bible. As the Book does not

make experiences, but experiences the Book, hear them: "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want." "Unto Thee, oh Lord, do I lift up my soul." "In Thee, oh Lord, do I put my trust; let me never be ashamed: deliver me in Thy righteousness." "The word of the Lord came unto me, saying," is a favourite expression of Ezekiel. Isaiah cries: "In the year that King Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple." Then we hear the Master saying: "He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me: and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father: and My Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." Again: "All things have been delivered unto Me of My Father: and no one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him." Once again: "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood abideth in Me, and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he that eateth Me, he also shall live because of Me." Finally: "If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the teaching."

We have here only a few notes of the universal melody. Plainly, both revelation and experience teach that it is possible for every soul to know, through Christ Jesus, the will of God. Being pos-

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sible, then, is it desirable for me to know God's will concerning my soul? The fact is, nothing else is desirable. Everything else in life gets its meaning from this fontal truth. Learning the will of God is the ever-deepening, ever-perfecting education of life. Talk about questions of the day! This is the question of all days, all years, all ages—the question of eternity! Hear me: if God has a special will relating to my soul, which can be revealed to no other soul in the universe, then it is more desirable that I know what that will is than that I live or die, be sick or well, rich or poor, learned or ignorant. And why? Because “in His will is our peace.” “This is the will of God, even your sanctification.” “Oh, my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from Me; nevertheless, not My will, but Thine, be done.” Even the Eternal Son found his victory and peace within the Father's will. And God's apostle prays that Christian disciples “may be filled”—see how he pulls out every stop in the organ—“may be filled with the knowledge of His will.” But does he pause there? No! Hear him unto the awful height of his supplication: “Unto all spiritual wisdom and understanding.” This is what I call, not the over-soul, not the over-universe, but the absolute, personal, holy God coming into personal relations with my spirit, breathing into my soul the *life* of eternal life. And Epaphras, no lazy sayers of prayers, prayed that “ye may stand perfect and fully as-

sured in all the will of God." Epaphras, too, had caught Paul's radiant contagion that the Christian may know God's holy will.

II

Doing God's Will: "To walk worthily of the Lord unto all pleasing." And why should I have knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding? Just to have a spiritual cosey-corner of my own? Just to have a spiritual flower garden whose odours must never sweeten the atmosphere beyond my garden fence? Just to form a select spiritual aristocracy whose members thrive upon the sweetmeats of mutual admiration? Just to sing, "Good-bye, proud world, I'm going home," and never come back again to help the proud world out of its proud and deadly sin? Not at all! I am to know God's will that I may do God's will. I am to know God's will that my passion may be deepened "to walk worthily of the Lord unto all pleasing."

"To walk worthily of the Lord"! Oh, what a majestic walk that must be! What a holy exercise unto the vast, eternal issues! What wondrous secrets my soul shall learn in such a walk as that! "To walk worthily of the Lord!" Oh, if God's good grace would only lead my soul to fall in love with such spiritual locomotion, I could walk to the end of time, and then start out on the eternal high-

ways without getting weary in well doing! "To walk worthily of the Lord"! Why, it is the Enoch-step projected into the twentieth century. It is the Moses-glory playing all around my path. It is the Elijah-fire burning at my very feet. It is the David-music serenading me on the way. It is the St. John-splendour infolding me. It is the Pauline passion beating in my blood. "To walk worthily of the Lord"! Oh, let its rhythm woo you, let its height draw you, let its depth deepen you!

Now, how is one to begin this worthy walk? It is a practical question, and it may have a practical answer. Our Lord says: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life." He also says: "He that followeth Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life." My first need, then, is a pure heart. Did you ever think of it? There is not an atom of space in all the universe where God is not. But I must have a pure heart before I can really know Him. "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." I need, also, a good pair of eyes. Like that Laodicean church, I may be saying to myself: "I am rich, and have gotten riches, and have need of nothing." And at that very moment I may be wretched and miserable and poor and blind. What then? Why, He says: "I counsel thee to buy of Me . . . eyesalve to anoint thine eyes, that thou mayest see." Then, too, I need a reconstructed intellect—an intellect enriched

by a vast capacity for humility. For as long as my puny intellect stands stark and stiff in its icicle pride, the hidden things of God, the great, rich, velvet splendours of the Almighty, cannot get in to line my brain cells with their imperial strengths and luminous insights. "At that season,"—when proud Chorazin and Bethsaida and Capernaum refused to repent—"Jesus answered and said, I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes: yea, Father, for so it was well-pleasing in Thy sight." It is not for me to explain why, but it simply does not please Infinite Wisdom to make revelations to infinite nonsense—to an intellect so cold and dead in its pride as to ward off the light and warmth beating in upon it from the throne of God. I need, moreover, a keen, sensitive pair of ears. "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a great voice." Ah! that is it! I need ears so turned upon the spiritual spaces that I may hear a *great voice*—a voice that swallows up all the little, thin, squeaking, chattering voices, and blends them into a mighty volume of spiritual melody, harmonizing my being to the rhythmic goings of the Almighty and Everlasting Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Oh, I need so many things to walk worthily of the Lord. I need a refined taste. I need a quick and steady hand. I need an undefiled tongue. But, thank God! no

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matter what I need, it is ready and waiting for me. "And He hath said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness."

III

Fruitfulness Through Knowing and Doing God's Will: "Bearing fruit in every good work." I am to know God's will—spiritual intelligence. I am to do God's will—spiritual intelligence appropriated by spiritual power. I am to be fruitful—spiritual intelligence and spiritual power bursting into eternal blossom and bloom. Unto what may we liken such a soul? Why, unto an orchard. Look at the great rows upon rows of trees. There is not a scrub tree among them. Every tree, and every branch of every tree, and every twig of every branch hanging with luscious, juicy fruit! Did you ever see an orchard like that? No? Well, in the Country that we are pilgrims to, the orchards are so prolific that the leaves of the trees produce fruit. "And the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." But listen: We are not in that Land yet. It is our business, therefore, to make gardens and plant orchards on the way—"bearing fruit in every good work."

Yes; let me repeat it: The idea is that every disciple is to be a fragrant, bursting, fruitful orchard. Now, if you are fruitful, you must be healthful. And if you are healthful, you must

comply with the laws of health. For it is not an easy task to grow an orchard. Soil, seed, sunshine, rain, and cultivation are essential factors. Moreover, an orchard cannot be grown in a day. It requires years and years to grow an orchard. It is not the work of a summer holiday. But it is far more difficult, as well as a far greater achievement, to grow a fruitful life. I fear we do not appreciate the stupendousness of our Christian calling, my brethren. I fear we work in our spiritual gardens only in the cool of the day—and sometimes on Sunday mornings. I fear we take it for granted that the fruitful life will somehow get on. What matters it if weeds and thorns and briars have already choked it into a kind of chameleon plant, resembling a weed, a thorn, and a briar all strangely interblended?

One sometimes hears the remark: "I will take a peep into church to-day." Well, I am persuaded that souls need more than sporadic peeps into church. They need rather to be planted in that divine vineyard, where groweth the True Vine; where God the Father is the husbandman; where the pruning-knife is used to cut away the fruitless branches; and where, also, every branch that beareth fruit is cleansed, that it may bear more fruit. Professor G. Currie Martin says he was admiring the beauty of a friend's rhododendron bushes. The friend looked at him with a smile and said: "Yes, I used to be rather proud of them myself. But I

lost conceit of them, when some time ago I visited India. For there, on the slopes of the Himalayas, I saw the rhododendron as it ought to grow—no longer a shrub, but a forest tree, and the vast masses of it crowned with magnificent blossoms.” And I think we need to visit often the native hill country of our King. Oh, we need to see with grace-washed eyes Bethlehem, Gethsemane, and Calvary, and the Empty Tomb, and Ascension Mount, and that Upper Room which burned with tongues of flame, and was not consumed. There shall we see God’s spiritual orchards as they ought to grow. No longer puny scrubs, starved by feeding upon philosophic mist, poisoned by drinking in theosophic rain, lean and shaken by psychologic winds, pale and pert by much quaffing of monistic perfume, uncertain and dizzy through large doses of gnostic delusion, sere and yellow by constant breathing of worldly atmospheres. Oh, no! “The trees of the Lord are full of sap.” “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in His law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.” Ah! there is no waste of energy, no contagious fussiness, no flat and nagging weariness in a life like that. For it

is set in a soil enriched by the flowing tides of the River of Life. Its roots run down deep, scenting the eternal water. "And everything whithersoever the river cometh shall live." And live, "bearing fruit in every good work."

IV

The Enlargement of the Whole: "And increasing in the knowledge of God." This phrase is not mere repetition, not meaningless tautology, not rhetorical supererogation on Paul's part. He seems to be saying: "I have prayed that you may know God's will, that you may do God's will, that through knowing and doing God's will you may bear fruit; now I pray that you may enlarge the whole scope and sphere of your being—increasing in the knowledge of God." Just as if you had a garden and added another garden onto it, moving out the dividing fence to enclose the whole. Just as if you had a St. Peter's and then dropped another St. Peter's down alongside, battering away the separating walls, that you might make the twain one vast cathedral and symbol of immensity. Just as if you took the Atlantic, the Pacific, the Amazon, the Mississippi, the Ohio, the Hudson waters, removing all the stretches of land between them, that they might mingle in one great liquid expanse, and then zoned it all around with the earth that had been taken away. "Increasing

in the knowledge of God"! Why, it is an apostolic call for lengthened cords and strengthened stakes. It is a challenge to do all, and having done all, to start afresh to do more. It is an appeal to grow in grace, and then having grown, to grow on. It is an invitation to come up higher, and after reaching the highest height, to climb to a higher summit still.

As a barefoot boy, I have sat on a summer's day in the sweet meadow grass down on my father's farm, watching a hawk describe circles in a turquoise sky. Round and round and round he goes. Then round and round and round he goes again. But his circle is larger. Once more he goes round and round and round. But his circle is larger still, and he is mounting higher and higher. So on he goes, round and round, higher and higher, until he looks like a wingèd dot in that awful upper ethereal sea. Oh, my soul, learn thy lesson. Keep thine eye upon the goal of prayer. Know God's will, do God's will, bear fruit through knowing and doing God's will, and then keep on enlarging thy sphere forever and ever. Be not weary in well doing. Be not fearful of men, angels, devils, death, or hell. Love God, trust Christ, serve men, fear only sin. Say with the apostle: "Brethren, I count not myself yet to have laid hold: but one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high

calling of God in Christ Jesus.” And what if one fall in the race? For sooner or later, fall we must, and we must all fall. Oh, then, never mind—it is well, eternally well! “For we know that if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens.”

“Lord of all being! throned afar,
Thy glory flames from sun and star:
Center and soul of every sphere,
Yet to each loving heart how near!

“Sun of our life, thy quickening ray
Sheds on our path the glow of day;
Star of our hope, thy softened light
Cheers the long watches of the night.

“Our midnight is Thy smile withdrawn;
Our noontide is Thy gracious dawn;
Our rainbow arch Thy mercy’s sign:
All save the clouds of sin are Thine!”

VIII

THE SPIRITUAL DEEPS

"Put out into the deep."—ST. LUKE v. 4.

“PUT out into the deep”! It is the command of Life’s Commander. Perhaps one should say Life’s Admiral, knowing that just now He is on the sea. And here is one of the bewildering glories of our Lord. In trying to find adequate words or metaphors to express our thought of Him, we become strangely mixed, confused, almost overwhelmed, hopelessly wandering in rhetorical maze and medley. We call Him Master, Prophet, Priest, King, Saviour, Lord, the Captain of our Salvation, the Son of Man, the Son of God. We seem unable to find titles strong and rich and deep and expressive enough for Him. Now, why is this? Is it not simply because He touches life at every conceivable point? Why, He turns the universe itself into a phonograph. The sea, the bird, the lily, the sun, the child, the man—all are so many rich-hued words by which He teaches the grammar of God’s Fatherhood and man’s sonship, through His own august and solitary mediation.

Truly, our Master loved the sea. The music of its waves reached farther back into His soul than any that ever heard its liquid, billowing thunders. And there is nothing strange in this, considering who and what He was. It is because He had vaster reaches of being to be penetrated, finer chords of responsiveness to be struck, deeper tones of spiritual reality to find expression. The mystery of the sea and the mystery of humanity were alike open before Him. He knew what was in man and He knew what was in the seas and the stars, for He made them also. The physical symbol and the spiritual fact nestled like heavenly twins within the soundless depths of His consciousness. In a word, the sea was a silver string in the harp named His Father's universe. One day His hand smote the harp and some age-long, *practical* melodies flowed forth. He turned the physical water into spiritual wine, He touched the material deep, and there came rolling in from the infinite beach heavenly-human rhythms.

I

There is, supremely, the deep of obedience. "Launch out into the deep." Peter answers: "Master, we toiled all night, and took nothing; but at Thy word I will let down the nets." I bid you cling to the original setting, but I bid you think, also, of the living, present, personal application. Have we sounded this deep of obedience to our

Lord? Have we become spiritual divers, bringing up from inexhaustible depths the soul-pearls lying on those mystic floors? In our religion, it is a verbal truism that we must obey Christ if we would know Christ and His Father God. Some of us have heard this so often that we do not hear it at all. And yet there is no truth that we can so ill afford to allow to become dust-covered. For without whole-hearted obedience to Him, we may toil all night—yes, and all our lives—only to find dismal failure staring us out of countenance at the end.

Of course, we walk no longer by the Galilean Sea. We are celestial sailors out on the fathomless deep of human life. And this great heaving, rolling human sea becomes vaster, more mysterious, more perilous all the time. I think we know more of the splendid capacity of human nature to-day than any former generation. We are not less interested in stars and mountains and animals. But we are more interested in poor men and rich men, in weak babes and wise sages—that is, in man, with his possible spiritual enrichments, with his awful spiritual perils. Toiling and rowing amid contrary winds and angry waves, there is but One Voice that can quiet the storm, but One Master who can trample the billows into peace. Yet we cannot hear that Voice, except we allow Him to become the Captain of our soul, the Pilot of our life's white ship as it makes for the wondrous deeps of

the eternal sea. Obedience to Christ is the key—and the only key—that opens every unlocked door in human nature. His challenge is: “If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from Myself.” No person—wise or foolish, known or unknown, king or peasant, painter or poet, philosopher or scientist, saint or sinner—ever sincerely accepted this challenge without God’s winning a masterful and glorious victory in his soul. For Christ is the revealer, the unique, solitary saving revealer, of God to the human spirit. “At that season Jesus answered and said, I thank Thee, oh Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes: yea, Father, for so it was well-pleasing in Thy sight. All things have been delivered unto Me of My Father: and no one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him.” Grand, mightier, more meaningful words never found voice in this universe, my friends. Oh, let us climb to His feet, as once again we hear Mary say at the wedding in Cana: “Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it.” The deep of obedience to Christ yields undreamed soul-treasure here and now, and in the world to come might, dominion, and eternal life!

II

There is heré, also, the deep of coöperation. "And they beckoned unto their partners in the other boat, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink." In a noble fashion, surely, is it not the human response answering the human call, the human helpfulness, under the pressure of divine power, rushing to the human need? I fancy that, as this fishing triumph was going on, our Lord said to Himself: "This is the way My men and women will help each other in the ages to come. Sometimes the Ship of Zion will flounder on the shoals of worldliness, or will almost go to pieces upon the deceptive rocks of philosophy, or be engulfed in the whirlpools of psychology, or lose herself in the fogs of commercialism. The night of doubt will shut in amid a dismal, dripping rain of distress. Then will I speak to My servants in their failure, and they will obey Me. And obeying Me, their failure shall be turned into success. They will have to call to their brethren to assist them in conserving the results of their obedience to Me."

Obedience to Christ, then, is the atmosphere in which brotherhood and service thrive, in which the veins of the social organism course with the red blood of social health, in which the individual puts forth the great virtues in ripe clusters of Christian character and abiding reality. Oh, believe me,

there is nothing so tender, so deep, so strong, so beautiful, as this spirit of interpenetration, of spiritual infusion, of soul mutuality, which Christ creates in His people. This is true, I think, because all redeemed spirits are related to Him as the light to the sun, as the colour to the rose, as the sap to the tree, as the song to the bird, as the soul to the spirit. Eternal intimacies are thus established, sacred fellowships are born, celestial societies are created, spiritual contagions are inbreathed by Him who is Light of very Light, God of very God. "Ye did not choose Me," He says, "but I chose you, and appointed you, that ye should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should abide: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in My name, He may give it you."

Oh, has He not called us into holy coöperations? Has he not committed to us the wielding of invisible forces? Has he not assured us that, in bringing estranged souls into fellowship with Himself, we are doing a work angelic hosts yearn to perform? So, He points us to the vast human sea, heaving and sobbing between the contending forces of heaven and hell, and says: "Help each other to help all others to My haven of comfort and rest. Where failure ends, I begin. Where hope dies, I come. Where defeat mocks, I win righteous victory." For back of the human call, back of the human response, stands the risen, reigning, omniscient, omnipotent, loving Lord, who, for us

men and our salvation, came down all the dizzy heights from the throne of the universe to the crimson depths of the Cross, that He might lift us beyond angels and principalities and powers, on and up to those Deity-crowned summits where God Himself is life and light, where Christ is Lord and King, where the redeemed chant their rhythmic antiphonals on the banks of the Shimmering Sea!

III

Furthermore, there is the deep of self-revelation. "But Simon Peter, when he saw it, fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Ah, the sea may be deep, but the deepest thing in all the universe is the human heart. Hidden away in the depths of space are star-splendours which only God's eye can see. Astronomers are catching glimpses, from Mount Wilson Observatory, of the fiery garments of a new world being born out yonder six trillions of miles in space. If an archangel were to start from that new world to-day, flying 186,000 miles a second, or 16,070,400,000 miles a day, it would take him 365 days before he would brush our planet with his flashing wings. Already scientists are wondering what kind, if any, inhabitants will be grown upon this wondrous new world. Of course, no mortal can say. But I venture this: After a billion years, this new world will contain no creature more

wonderful, more mysterious, more fraught with capacity for good and evil, than men and women like ourselves. Deep down in the human consciousness are buried wells of holiness which only Christ's hand can uncover.

Now, Simon is suddenly gazing into one of these wells. Isn't it marvellous how he begins to talk about sin? As yet, not a word has been spoken about sin. Not a word has been said about purity. So far, there has been but the confession of failure, the pledge of obedience, and the startling success of a defeated fishing party. But now, Simon forgets his boat, forgets his companions, forgets his breaking nets, forgets everything but his sin and cries: "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, oh Lord."

What have we here, what is going on in this man's soul? Why, God is setting up in the individual conscience the very same white judgment throne from which he rules celestial intelligences and heavenly hierarchies! And what is the effect upon the man? First, humiliation: "Simon Peter fell down at Jesus' knees." God is giving a man a true vision of Himself. There is no sublimer spectacle, my brethren. Angels veil their faces with wings of fire as they cry one to another: "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory." One generation of God's spiritual giants cries to another: "Down upon your knees! Down upon your knees, oh

man!" Abraham begins the cry in Ur of the Chaldees. Moses pleads it upon the thunder-shaken mount. David wails it in the valley of penitence: "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done that which is evil in Thy sight." Paul is struck down by it upon the highway. Then he rises up, clothed in the might of its terrible majesty, to batter the thrones of the Cæsars down to dust. So, also, Luther and Calvin and Knox and Wesley and Beecher and Simpson and Brooks and Galloway and Moody fell down into the awful, self-revealing sublimities towering at the knees of Jesus, the Son of Man and the Son of the Living God!

But there is something more. Humiliation is followed by a deepening sense of unworthiness. "Depart from me!" "Let not Thy pure eye, oh Christ, gaze upon my naked soul. Woe is me! I am undone! I have seen God face to face. God's holiness has lit up my unholiness. I see myself as I am. I am become as one that is unclean, and all my righteousnesses are as a polluted garment." Oh, is it not a scene to soften the tread of angels and men? With the searchlight of eternity, God is burning His own gleaming, glowing pathways through the untrodden realms of an immortal soul. And why? Because sin would blacken the snow of a seraph's wing. Sin would drag the throne of God down to the nethermost depths of hell. Sin demands isolation. It cannot endure the presence

of God, but neither can God endure the vermin of sin. So, sin cries to holiness: "Depart from me"! But no! The battle is on between omnipotent God and terrible sin. And through that Man whom He hath ordained, clothed in red garments, and riding a white horse at the head of celestial and redeemed armies, God is going to win a victory over sin in His universe which will set the stars to ringing like golden bells, which will set the angels to winging with swifter flight, which will set men to singing the new song, out of every nation and of all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, arrayed in white robes, and palms in their hands, saying, Salvation unto our God who sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb!

Humiliation, unworthiness, and confession—here is the third fact in the trinity of salvation. "I am a sinful man, O Lord"! My friends, I am willing that science and philosophy and education should have their full place in our lives. But I am not willing that we should be so self-deceived as to ignore the fact that we are sinful men and women; or that we should refuse, through neglect or self-deception, to confess our sins to Him who is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If the Incarnation and Atonement mean anything, they mean that in them "God has entered into a new relation with His created universe, with the nature

and sin of humanity.” They mean that this new relation has become the basis of all future progress in our race. They mean that every penitent soul may find full forgiveness and eternal life in the person of Christ. Let me quote, just here, from President Mackenzie’s masterful work on “The Final Faith”: “The horrid and unchristian doctrine that we must carry the scars of our sins forever upon our persons and in our memories, which is sometimes illustrated in the shallowest way by smatterers in physiology and psychology, is to be rejected as an insult to God and as an injury to many a perturbed conscience. The forgiveness of sins is a complete act of the love of God, and its whole, wondrous, pure, and blessed issues are to be read only in the deepest outcries of a sincere penitence and the vast claims of a measureless trust.” For a long time I have wanted to hear some true prophet of God and teacher in Christ say this, which is a noble expression of the New Testament reality.

But just because of its reality, what a terrible thing for a human being to live and die—no matter what our pretence or profession—as if Jesus Christ had never lived and died, as if He were not living and reigning now, as He worketh all things after the counsel of His Father’s will! One can think of nothing more awful than the hopeless awakening of a self-deceived soul. This is a side of human nature which has held in its imperial

grasp the imagination of prophet and seer from Jeremiah to St. Paul, from Aeschylus to Shakespeare, from Shakespeare to Browning. In "Pippa Passes," Browning has illustrated this truth with startling power. Ottima, the old miller's wife, and her paramour, are sipping sin's poisoned nectar. The woman is saying: "Crown me your great white queen, magnificent in sin!" But hark! as Sebald is in the very act of repeating her dreadful words, Pippa, the glad-hearted, soul-free, innocent mill-worker, making the most of her holiday, passes by singing: "God's in His heaven, all's right with the world." Like a flash of heaven's lightning, the words strike into Sebald's very soul, and he says:

" That little peasant's voice
Has righted all again. Though I be lost,
I know which is the better, never fear,
Of vice or virtue, purity or lust,
Nature or trick! I see what I have done,
Entirely now! Oh, I am proud to feel
Such torments—let the world take credit thence—
I, having done my deed, pay too its price!"

But oh, what a frightful price to pay! What a desolate self-revelation it is! It is the depth of despair—the fearful awakening of a soul without God and without hope, because God has been mocked and hope has been slain, the white sanctities of life have been hissed and stung to death by the spotted, glittering snake of sin coiled in the palace of Man-Soul! But standing over against

such unrelieved gloom, Jesus says: "Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out." Jesus says: "The Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins." Jesus says: "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light."

IV

The fourth and final note our Lord struck from that harp named the Galilean Sea is: The deep of life's mission. "And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men." Oh, the tenderness, the delicateness, the richness, the majesty and power of Christ! Simon is trembling like a paper boat upon a storm-lashed sea. Now, see the Master turn that frail boat into a strong, silken cradle of peace, as He hushes and nestles Peter's crying, fearful soul down into the mother-heart of divine love! He says: "Simon, I have shown you the wonders of the physical deep, which leap at my command, that you may behold the wonders in the deeps of your own soul. You have learned the lessons of obedience, coöperation, and self-revelation. You have peered into the fathomless depths of your own nature. Now, just turn your eyes away from yourself, fasten your gaze

upon Me, and fear not; from henceforth you shall catch men!"

My brethren, God has called us, in Christ, to catch men. Not gold, but men; not fame, but men; not ease, but men. God does not ask us to help Him swing stars through the spatial canopies. God does not ask us to help Him uprear mountains. God does not ask us to help Him fashion channels for the oceans. God does not ask us to help Him open and shut the gates of morn and even. But He hath reserved for us a finer, nobler, higher, more durable work. And that work is: To keep our souls so hid with Christ in God, that, as we walk the shores of life's Galilees, as we thread the glooms of life's Gethsemanes, as we endure the aches of life's Calvaries, as we sleep, sooner or later, from sunset to third-day sundawn in life's new tomb, as we rise at last from life's Olivets to mansions behind the stars—in all and through all, to have our souls shot through and through with Christ's power and glory, that henceforth and forever we may catch men! His unfailing secret is this: "Come ye after Me, and I will make you to become fishers of men. I will bait your golden hook of transfigured personality with the food of angels, and men shall not be able to resist your noble winsomeness."

And remember, also, if we follow Him, some day we shall stand with prophets and martyrs and saints and sages, with white-garmented men and women and children, with those whom we have

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loved and lost awhile, with "ten thousand times
ten thousand in sparkling raiment bright," as they
and we sing the song of Moses and the Lamb
by the musical shore of Heaven's unsobbing
sea!

IX

THE SHELTERED LIFE

"In the covert of Thy presence shalt Thou hide them from the plottings of man: Thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues."—PSALM xxxi. 20.

THE Thirty-first Psalm gives us the music of the sheltered life. Like all great music and all great life, there stands in the background, clear-cut and sublime, a great experience. The psalm was written by one whose soul had been engulfed in the crimson river of suffering. All the waves and billows of affliction seem to have rolled over this ancient minstrel. But the severity of his pain is surpassed by the majesty of his music. Pursued by enemies, shunned by friends, hated by himself, he is indeed a pathetic figure, the hollow eyes, the weary soul, and the emaciated body all testifying to the physical and mental effects of trouble.

But over against the prisoner of iron circumstance, the sorry figure, stands another—one with a great faith in a great God, one who believes that the goodness of Jehovah is beyond all capacity of human reckoning. "How great," he cries, "is Thy goodness which Thou dost keep in secret for

them that fear Thee, dost work before the sons of men for them, who take refuge in Thee. Thou dost shelter them in the shelter of Thy face from the plots of men; Thou keepest them in secret in an arbour from the strife of tongues." So, while the Psalmist knew the tragedy of life, in its dire blackness and pulsing pain, he also knew the richness of life, in its vast outlooks and inexpressible joys.

I

Consider how this man found shelter through communion with God. It is through unbroken communion with his Father that man is kept from being overwhelmed in the multitude of his troubles. Afflictions may be so many black sentinels tramping along the soul's pathway to make the load heavier. Or, they may be so many angels leading the soul into deeper fellowship with God—it all depends upon whether the soul mars or masters its opportunity. Now, the Psalmist understood the value of a strong grip upon God. Stripped of everything else, he clung to his trust in God. With slanderous tongues hissing like serpents, with terror on every side, with threats of assassination flying thick and fast, our prophet of the sheltered life sings: "But I trusted in Thee, O Lord: I said, Thou art my God. My times are in Thy hand." When troubles whizzed about him like bullets, he ran home to the heart of God. He did not remain down in the

valley of gloom, where enemies could hurl their shot and shell upon him; he climbed the hill of glory, where God was his strong rock, a house of defence to save him.

And that is just what we ought to do—cultivate a mighty trust in a mighty God. “The more nestlingly a soul clings to God, the more vehemently will it recoil from other trust.” Just let a man be steadied by the conviction that his soul and God are in tune with each other, and he cannot be thrown down. The universe may get the quivers and terrors, but such a man will never get the shivers and horrors. He belongs to God, God belongs to him, and the cosmos belongs to both. “If you believe in God,” wrote Robert Louis Stevenson, “where is there any more room for terror? If you are sure that God, in the long run, means kindness by you, you should be happy.” Fighting a losing battle with death, he wrote: “The tragedy of things works itself out blacker and blacker. Does it shake my cast-iron faith? I cannot say that it does. I believe in an ultimate decency of things; aye, and if I woke in hell, should still believe it.” Let us thank God for the faith of that high and brave soldier of suffering, going up and down the earth in quest of health, and singing as he went:

“If to feel in the ink of the slough,
And sink of the mire,
Veins of glory and fire
Run through and transpierce and transpire,

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And a secret purpose of glory in every part,
And the answering glory of battle fill my heart;
To thrill with the joy of girded men,
To go on forever and fail and go on again,
And be mauled to the earth and arise,
And contend for the shade of a word and a thing not seen
with the eyes:
With the half of a broken hope for a pillow at night
That somehow the right is the right
And the smooth shall bloom from the rough:
Lord, if that were enough?"

Another phase of the ministry of communion with God is this: it prevents a man from getting lost in the crowd. Sydney Smith said he was always uncomfortable in society until he learned two things: first, that everybody was not looking at him; second, that he could not be any one but Sydney Smith, no matter how hard he tried. And these are two lessons that many men never learn. They go through life frustrated, confused, overwhelmed by the bigness of the crowd, transfixed by its vast eyes, and lacking the strength of individuality to be themselves.

Now, the man who lives the sheltered life, who knows the secret of communion with God, can never be utterly swallowed up by the crowd. Most of us, I am quite sure, can appreciate the position of the awkward, ungainly boy in a room filled with people. He is ill at ease; his tongue cleaves to the roof of his mouth; his eyes behold nothing in particular; his hands wander about over his body in an aimless quest of nothingness; his feet are too

shambling and heavy for the task of locomotion—in short, he is a wordless, unlettered monument manifesting the possibilities of human misery. Then let some big, magnetic, warm-hearted, whole-souled man, at home anywhere and the master of every situation, approach our suffering, martyred lad. We behold a transformation at once. The boy's face exchanges its stare for intelligent illumination; he finds his tongue; he discovers that he is not all hands; there is elasticity in his step, because he has lost his weight of misery. What has produced the change? Why, the jovial, cheery, sunny-souled man has simply led the boy up under the shelter of his own radiant personality and taught him to be his real self. The boy is at home in the crowd, and the sense of lostness has made room for a feeling of pleasant familiarity with his surroundings.

And the man who trembles beneath the appalling weight of life's mystery; who becomes dizzy as his inner ear hears stars and suns whirl off the cosmic harmony; who feels the solitude of the far-stretching universe much more than does the awkward boy the loneliness of the crowded room; who, like the Psalmist, witnesses the wasting away of faculties and energies, conscious that his life is spent with sorrow and his years with sighing—let that man experience the uplifting, transfiguring thrill of a personal God entering his life, sheltering him under the shining presence of His Father-

heart, and such a man will make confession: "In the covert of Thy presence hast Thou hidden me from the plottings of man."

Surely, that first disciple band—Peter, James, John, and the rest—each and all testify to the power of the sheltered life. They revolutionized the world because the sheltering presence of the Lord Christ was upon them. It was through these men that Jesus put His own omnipotent shoulder under the thrones of paganism and toppled them over. There is no other possible explanation of the change wrought in the disciples. The person of Christ was formed within their natures, charging them with a surging passion and a mighty madness to save unchristian men. Why, look at Peter on the night of Christ's trial. The night was black, but Simon's conduct was blacker still. A maiden's glances stabbed his short-lived heroism to the death. Thrice over he denied so much as a passing acquaintance with the Master.

But wait! that was not the Peter Christed through and through, possessed and sheltered by the risen Lord. Ah, no! he was just unstable, impetuous, cowardly Simon, an easy prey to the plottings of man! Let us walk up the hill of Calvary, then down into Joseph's garden, then out by the sea in the early morning, then up the slope of Olivet, then back to that upper chamber in Jerusalem, where they "all with one accord continued steadfastly in prayer," then on to the day of Pentecost,

when "they were all together in one place." Now, look at Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, unfolding the plan of salvation, which existed in the mind of God "through times eternal," preaching the resurrection—ah! listen to Peter pouring forth the matchless music of redemption! What mattered it that mockers accused that Spirit-possessed company of being filled with new wine? Peter, splendour-clad, flaming, majestic, invincible, shouts: "Thou, Lord Jesus, art sheltering me in the shelter of Thy face from the plottings of man!"

But this is not merely a first-century experience, my friends. It is also a twentieth-century reality. Men are practising the sheltered life this day just as truly as it was ever lived in any age of the world. Men are sustained, men are guided, men are helped, men are consoled by the sheltering presence of the living, reigning Christ, as they walk up and down the streets of your city, just as were the men who walked up and down the streets of Jerusalem. This is the unwithering, unwasting, unfading glory of our holy religion—it is contemporary with the needs and duties of every human life in every age and place of the world. It shows men what they ought to do, and then it shows them how to do it in the finest possible way. And "simply to do what we ought," says George MacDonald, "is an altogether higher, diviner, more potent, more creative thing than to write the grandest poem, paint the most beautiful picture, carve the

mightiest statue, build the most worshipping temple, dream out the most enchanting combination of melody and harmony."

II

Furthermore, one of the most enriching values of the sheltered life is the education of personality: "Thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues." A weak personality is ever the prey of the strife of tongues. During the opening of a free picture exhibition two women were looking at Lord Leighton's painting of "Helen of Troy." "It is a horrid picture," one said to the painter, who happened to be standing by. "I'm sorry, but it's mine," said the artist. "Oh!" said the lady, "you don't mean to say that you have bought it?" "No; I painted it," said Lord Leighton. "Oh!" declared the woman, "you must not mind what we say. We are only saying what everybody else says." And that is about the most heroic thing a victim of the strife of tongues can do—just repeat what everybody else says. God never intended that man should be a parrot, else He would have put feathers on him!

On the other hand, consider how a strong personality is ever master of the strife of tongues. During a bitterly contested Canadian election, in which efforts were made to stir up race and religious prejudice, Sir Wilfrid Laurier was electioneering in Ontario. One day a Quebec Liberal telegraphed

the Premier as follows: "Report in circulation in this country that your children have not been baptized. Telegraph denial." Sir Wilfrid answered: "Sorry to say report is correct. I have no children." Thus did the statesman place a proper value upon the strife of tongues!

We have in Mrs. Brookfield's "The Cambridge 'Apostles,'" what has been called "A Golden Book of Friendship." It is a record of the doings and sayings of a group of undergraduates at St. John's College, Cambridge, in the year 1820. Longing for a deeper intellectual and heart life than the University afforded, these young men met in one another's rooms on Saturday night, when they discussed philosophy, read essays, and talked on religion and other subjects. Like those early Methodists, they came by their name through an ironical remark of a fellow-student, who called them "Apostles."

Well, he spoke more wisely than he knew. For among those young men were Thomas Carlyle, Frederick D. Maurice, Arthur Hallam, Alfred and Charles Tennyson, Alford, afterwards Dean of Canterbury; Trench, the well-known Archbishop of Dublin; young Milnes, later Lord Houghton, "whose breakfasts became famous by reason of the catholicity of the invitations, and of whom Carlyle said that he ought to be president of a society for the amalgamation of heaven and hell."

Now, this illustrious gathering of young men is singularly impressive in this—there is not a weak personality among them. The buzz and clatter and strife of tongues during the more than two generations through which some of them lived, failed to rob them of that rich and vital inward power which melts discord into harmony. And this picture of the end of Tennyson's life, himself one of the most brilliant of the company, is worth looking at for a long time: "The splendid old bard, his Bible at his side, with his beautiful surroundings, fading into the sunset; his great achievements like banners around a cathedral, his noble poetry resounding his own Requiem. Did he not sing, when his first child died:

" 'Hallowed be thy name—Halleluiah!
 Infinite Ideality!
 Immeasurable Reality!
 Infinite Personality!
 Hallowed be thy name—Halleluiah! ' "

And so the great poet experienced the religious certitude, so nobly expressed by Schelling: "Only the personal can help the personal, and God must become man in order that man may come again to God." This is one of the divine methods of educating personality, leading it up and out of the jangle of the human into the shelter of the Infinite: "Thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues."

III

But, let us remember, that the secret of communion with God, and the education of personality, are to be attained that we may daily manifest the spirit of sacrificial service. Here is the golden avenue through which the soul may find magnificent escape from the plottings of man and the strife of tongues. Oh, the joy of the "red road," the path stained crimson by the heart's own blood, wrung out in serving others! Did you hear of that thirteen-year-old boy, who brought the dead body of his father up from the bottom of the Hackensack River? No? Well, then, you must hear of one of those deeds which make life worth living. On the 24th of last July a father went in bathing with his two boys, one seven and the other thirteen years old. Though an expert swimmer, the father was suddenly seized with cramps and sank to a watery grave. Then it was that this thirteen-year-old lad suddenly became a man and a hero. Not wanting him to see the body of his father, he said to his little brother: "Ivan, you run up there over the hill and stay a few minutes." And when Ivan was out of sight this lad, grown tall in the might of a marvellous heroism, began diving after the body of his father. He dived again and again without finding it. Finally, after cutting the water like a fish for fully twenty minutes, he found the body at the bottom of the river, face downward.

Did he bring the body to the surface? Ah! ask God if he brought that body up—ask God, who swelled his little heart and knitted his boyish arms with the strength of a mighty, sacrificial love! Yes; he brought him up! If the angels did not throw down their harps of gold, run to the battlements of glory, and watch that boy bring up the dead body of his father, they missed one of the grandest sights that ever passed before the eyes of earth and heaven! “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends,”—yea, that a boy lay down his life for his father! And if the cruel waters refused to accept the offering, it was because his heroism was stronger than their deadly current!

And did you read about that girl who has not gone undressed to bed for a week, watching night after night at the bedside of her sister? No; I am sure you have not read about her! Such deeds are not published in the daily press, because they are so fine and high that angelic penmen have to write them down in the Book of Life. When I asked: “How is your sister, this morning?” a pleasant smile lit up the weary face as she answered: “Oh, she is much better, thank you.” When I told her that I was inspired by the telephone message requesting the prayers of the Church, and that many earnest petitions besieged the throne of God for her sister’s recovery, then the tired soul broke down and wept. As the tears of joy ran like silver rain

down her quivering cheeks, she sobbed out one of those tender, wailing notes which can come only from the deeps of a woman's heart: "I have done the best I could!" A finer saying than that never slipped over the tongue of a mortal! And when it comes all warm and melodious and musical from the pure heart of truth, the angels of God bend down and listen!

Going directly across the street, I heard another sermon. It was also preached from a pulpit of pain by a preacher-saint. The feet of almost ninety winters have left their white traceries upon Auntie's head. But they are not nearly as white as her soul. For that has been washed in the blood of the Lamb, and nothing can stand by the side of God's whiteness. I did not know the dear soul was ill, but being in that section, I thought I would just step in and get a spiritual gift out of the hand of this rich old saint. And I got it, too, just as I was going. I said: "Well, Auntie, when I come in again I hope to find you up and making your English lace." She said: "But I may not be here when you come again." "Then," I said, "it is all right, Auntie, I am sure. You know the way Home, don't you?" "Oh, yes," she answered, "if we're fit to live, we're fit to die."

And that is the truth, my friends! If we are really fitted to live, we are always fitted to die, and to die is gain! The sacrificial spirit of service, twin sister of a soul's living faith, cannot fail to

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understand this dear, divine melody of David: "In the covert of Thy presence shalt Thou hide them from the plottings of man: Thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues"!

"God, if this were enough,
That I see things bare to the buff
And up to the buttocks in mire;
That I ask nor hope nor hire,
Nut in the husk
Nor dawn beyond the dusk,
Nor life beyond death:
God, if this were faith?

"Having felt Thy wind in my face
Spit sorrow and disgrace,
Having seen thine evil doom
In Golgotha and Khartoum,
And the brutes, the work of thine hands,
Fill with injustice lands
And stain with blood the sea:
If still in my veins the glee
Of the black night and the sun
And the lost battle, run:
If, an adept,
The iniquitous lists I still accept
With joy, and joy to endure and be withstood,
And still to battle and perish for a dream of good:
God, if that were enough?"

X

LIFE'S WIDENING HORIZONS (I)

"So the woman left her water-pot, and went away into the city."—JOHN iv. 28.

ONE is at a loss to find words to describe this scene. There are only two persons in it.

One stands upon the crowning summits of life. The other exists down in the blackest shadows of being. The One is *the* Life. The other is a type of death. The problem is to get the Life behind the death-shadow, that it may be lit up with the Light of Life. And this is what our Master actually does. He stoops from the pure heights of His own stainless beauty, slips His strong, tender hands beneath a soiled soul, and gently lifts that soul up into the white light of the Eternal.

But oh, the manner in which He does it! Surely, that is beyond all telling. Delicacy, tact, wisdom, love—all are here raised to their highest power. For here is a soul whose doors and windows are locked and barred. This poor woman is deep in her own misery, bleak in her own despair, unlovely in her own lovelessness. Now, see, how the Master

first wakes her, then woos her, then wins her. The Prince of Life, He becomes a pauper. Moreover, He becomes a pauper begging from a pauper. "Give Me to drink." He is quickly repulsed by the woman's reminder of the age-long antipathy between Jew and Samaritan. "How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, who am a Samaritan woman?" But He subdues her intended repulse into a symphony of tenderest yearning. "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, Give Me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water." And so, with unspeakable wisdom, He leads her out and on and up. He leads her out of herself. He leads her on to Himself. He leads her up through Himself into the Fatherhood of God.

Now, our text reveals her doing for others, in her own measure, what has already been done for herself. Or, to put it in a word: She symbolizes a soul climbing out of the jungles of animalism, into which it has wilfully plunged, up into the limitless realms of spiritual life. Thus does the passage tell of life's widening horizons. At first, our horizons are narrow and cramped enough. Literally, they are, indeed, less than seven miles away. But literally, also, they may be expanded into the tremendous immensities of measureless being, into the plummetless depths of life in God, through Christ Jesus.

I

Consider Life's Water-pot Stage: "So the woman left her water-pot." But is it so only of the woman? Is it not also true of every one of us? Human life begins at the water-pot stage. God intends childhood to be a day all morning. Childhood's day has no noon, no dark end. It is one great fresh swath of unmown greenness. Every blade of grass hath its dewy sparkle. For no blistering sun hath yet scorched those liquid jewels. Truly, the ring of innocence, worn upon childhood's fingers, is set with diamonds. They are the diamonds named trust, curiosity, innocence, happiness. And this is all good, very good. I sometimes think that every time a child is born the universe is recreated in miniature. Only, if we pause to think, the child teems with bigger, vaster wonder than the universe. For God created the universe out of His power. But God created the human spirit out of Himself. Into the universe He blew the breath of His power. Into man's soul He breathed Himself. That is how God created man in His own image and likeness. The universe is only an energized atom on a large scale. Man is an in-breathed "deocosm," smaller than the physical universe, to be sure. But he is greater and grander and more astonishing than anything in the universe. For, in Christ, man is the child of the great Father God. And God is within, but

God is also behind and above the universe and man.

And so, creation's crowning wonder, the little child, begins life at the water-pot stage. His circle is small. He is satisfied with rattles. He is tickled with straws. He is an entranced victim of gew-gaws. I have watched children blowing bubbles. As the airy, fairy, rainbowed globes floated away, the children laughed for joy and wonderment. But far more mystic and beautiful than the gorgeous colour-bubbles, are the children who blow them. And I have watched the stars blossom upon the far-spreading bush of space at night. I am told that as the earth is to a sand-grain, so, in size, are many of the stars to the earth. But far more wonderful than the dazzling buds that bloom upon the vast star-bush, is the mighty and eternal God who blows them into ageless brilliance. For the moment, however, I am saying that the most commanding process on this earth is that whereby a boy becomes a man. I believe that it is grandly true. The most magnificent sight we ever behold is a great big capacious man growing up from a little boy.

Now, in the race's childhood, we are told, God *made* a man. But the man the Lord God made, through no fault of God, was a failure. And let us be manly enough to confess that man's fall was not a fall heavenwards, either. For, as Doctor Newman Smyth says: "It is but a superficial view to regard man's fall as a fall upwards. It is in it-

self considered a descent, nothing but a descent, and never an ascent. No retrogression taken by itself can be regarded as a step forwards. Man's fall is a fall away from his true type. Sin is a plunge downwards, and into darkest depths." We should never become morally mawkish in our attempt to be fashionably scientific. For thus do we Nietzscheize Christian morals. That is, we lead them into an atheistic slaughter-house. And for what? Why, that the life-blood of Christian morals may be yielded up simply to gratify the brutality of a philosophic butcher. And every time we are guilty of this unchristian thing, we belittle the high and noble interests of science itself. For, when an age takes a worthy hypothesis like evolution, for example, and insists that the hypothesis is not secondary, but a kind of primary Messiah named the reign of law, then it is time for us to realize that science, morals, and humanity are all alike grievously wounded.

But ever since that far-off man-failure, God has been patiently growing men from boys. And it is a magnificent task. I believe it is altogether worthy of the great Taskmaster. We begin at the water-pot stage. We begin barely on the topmost fringe of the vanishing point. We begin at the next door to nowhere. But if we are true, we end in the many-splendoured palace of God's eternal somewhere. I have heard a certain lad not improperly described as an "animated mudpuddle."

Of course! The business of a healthy boy is to get as much mud as possible to cling to his face and hands and clothes. And it is equally the business of a healthy man to get as much godliness soaked into his spirit as his capacity will allow. At three, Phillips Brooks whined for a red-handled knife and fork. At fifty-three, he had engirdled the world with his prophet eloquence. But, even then, he writes to a friend: "I sometimes have suspicions that if I could live for five hundred years, I might come to something and do something here." Sir Isaac Newton was a dull, lazy boy in class. As he gravitated to the foot one day, according to schedule, a boy friend kicked him on the shin-bones. Then did young Isaac wake up, promptly thrash the offender, and start for the head of his class. Incidentally, he began that day his discovery of the law of gravity. For Brooks, for Newton, for you, for all of us, life's first horizon is the water-pot stage. But it is not the last!

II

Consider, therefore, that Life's Second Horizon is the City Stage: "And went away into the city." There is an old saying that God made the country, and man made the town. But the saying is not older than the untruth at its heart. For God made the country, and God made the town. And God is going to make both country and town, some of these

ages, into the White City of the Universe. "And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband." Ah, made ready? Yes! What is lovelier, more silver-fair, than a bride, made ready by love and adorned by white garments, for her husband? Well, the country-man, and the city-man, empowered by the grace of the God-Man, are going to make earth ready to be a part of the Capital City of the Great King.

Still, I think there are some joys the city-grown man must forever lack. There is, first, the joy of growing up in the country. This is not to say that there is conscious joy to the lad, in all cases, who does the growing. But that is equally true of all precious things. Their preciousness somehow grows upon us according to the square of their distance. Now, I think in after years, the country-grown lad recalls most vividly his memories of growing things. Lowell once said John Henry Newman made the mistake of thinking that God was the great "I was" rather than the great "I am." Surely, no man with the perfumes of country springs, summers, autumns, and winters drifting through his memory, can ever speak of God in the past tense only. Our country boy need not become the slave of a shallow pantheism, because he is constantly reminded that the living God is an ever-living Presence. For what is the truth, grasped there amid the growing, glowing things,

which makes ceaseless music in his heart, as the years slip away? Is not that dear, and ever dearer truth just this: He sees God in the cloud and in the clod. He sees God in the blackberry and in the night. He sees God in the greening tassels of corn and in the divers-coloured curtains of dawn. He sees God in the unrolling apple blossoms and in the "golden footprints" of the fading day. He sees God in the lustrous noontide and in the cool of the evening—"as the stars draw back their shining faces when they surround the fair moon in her silver fulness." He sees God in the flashing wing of the oriole and in the velvet gloriole of the violet, too modest to lift its shy head in the noisy world's vanity fair. He sees God in the beasts which do seek their meat from Him, and, above all, in his human brothers.

Now, all of our poets sing the song of country and city. God does not forget the country for the city, nor the city for the country. And God's great truth-singers and truth-seers—the poets—move the city countryward, and the country cityward. Song is the priest that makes the twain one symphony. Browning was a city man. But when he thinks of the country, like his own thrush:

"He sings each song twice over
Lest you should think he never could recapture
The first fine careless rapture."

And Shelley, too, the idol of Browning's youth, goes to the country, hears the skylark sing, and

brings back to the cities of earth his song, "To A Skylark." It is musical with the most subtle melody:

"What thou art we know not;
 What is most like thee?
 From rainbow clouds there flow not
 Drops so bright to see,
 As from thy presence showers a rain of melody.

* * * * *

"Better than all measures
 Of delight and sound,
 Better than all treasures
 That in books are found
 Thy skill to poet were, thou scorner of the ground.

"Teach me half the gladness
 That thy brain must know,
 Such harmonious madness
 From my lips would flow,
 The world should listen then, as I am listening now."

Critics are agreed that John Keats was the truest Greek spirit that ever homed in any but a Greek body. He could not read the Greek language. But he could faultlessly express, and that in English, the spirit which lay behind the Greek tongue. Keats' father kept a livery stable. But the boy was born to drive the "horses of the sun." Well-meaning friends tried to make a second-rate doctor out of him. But one day a boy companion read to him Spenser's "Epithalamium." Then, also, he lent him the "Faërie Queene." For Keats, that was the end of scalpels and test-bottles. The world soon

discovered that he was neither a hostler nor a surgeon. For God had hidden in the boy's soul mellifluous fountains of song. And when God wraps singing-robcs around a human spirit, the music must flow. Nothing can stop it. Fate will only deepen the current. Pain will only sweeten the tone. Poverty will only enrich the melody. Even the killing frost of untimely death will only blow the soul's music into tuneful blossoms of deathless harmony. So it is with poor John Keats.

Well, Keats once listened to the song of a nightingale. He named the invisible warbler a "light-winged Dryad of the trees." It sang "in some melodious plot of beechen green, and shadows numberless." But, sweetest of all, it sang "of summer in full-throated ease." Keats stood and listened. And his soul seemed to float away upon the passionate stream of the bird's ecstatic song. Rescuing himself from his rapturous enchantment, the dying boy seized his pen. Then and there every drop of ink was transmuted into a pure diamond note of immortal song. For, in his "Ode to a Nightingale," Keats poured the blended rhythm of country and city, of sea and mountain, of ancient east and modern west, of hovel and palace, of peasant and king, into this flawless chalice of softly murmuring music:

"Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!
No hungry generations tread thee down;

The voice I hear this passing night was heard
 In ancient days by emperor and clown;
 Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
 Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,
 She stood in tears amid the alien corn;
 The same that oft-times hath
 Charmed magic casements, opening on the foam
 Of perilous seas, in faëry lands forlorn."

Now, ~~Sappho was the subtle-souled singer of~~
 eighty generations ago. As Homer was the su-
 preme poet, she was and is, earth's supreme poetess.
 She was the nightingale of time's vanished morn-
 ings. Only one hundred and seventy fragments
 of her songs remain. But every one is a perfect
 silver chime ringing in a golden tower of melody.
 For, in Sappho, the classic glow of pure Greek fire
 —"in that high imperious verbal economy which
 only Nature can teach the Artist"—burned like a
 rosy flame in a shell of snowy pearl. Well, what
 I want to say is this: If I believed in the doctrine
 of transmigration, ~~I could easily believe that the~~
~~songful soul of "violet-tressed, sweetly smiling,~~
~~pure Sappho," passed from that fair island in the~~
~~Ægean sea, remained away from earth for twenty-~~
~~four centuries, then came back and warbled~~ for a
 few brief summers and winters through the poems
 of John Keats! And Keats' poems are full of the
 beauty, the witchery, the fragrance, the bloom of
 the country.

"And went away into the city." There is an-
 other joy the city-grown man has never had. It

is the country boy's first visit to the city. Ah! can he ever forget it? Never! Never! Never! He began to go the night before. Unlike the successful rival in "Locksley Hall," he did not hunt like a dog in dreams. For there were no dreams because there was no sleep. He lay awake all night trying to hurry up the morning. But it seemed the morning would never, never come. Have you forgotten, oh city man evolved from the country boy, the weary waiting as "you watched the long black shadows creep"? And then they kept on creeping. Then, after creeping on, they crept some more. Surely, you thought, Aurora's chariot made as slow time as a gasless automobile. The poets had told you how Aurora, goddess of the dawn, rose out of the sea, in a chariot, "with rosy fingers dropping gentle dew." But on that morning you were going to the city for the first time, Aurora's fingers were not rosy—they were not even handsome thumbs! Nor did they drop gentle dew. They did not drop anything—unless you thought they had dropped you. Like Enoch, Aurora simply was not. And you had no reason for thinking that God had taken her. Aurora, with her dawn-chariot, rosy fingers, and gentle dew, had just forgotten to come—that was all!

And lo! when you were at last ready to tumble into an abyss of dreamless sleep, why, Miss Aurora came! You were up in an instant. You beat the lark, you beat the sun, you beat everything and

everybody—but yourself. Though you had already packed your grip, you packed it again for joy. And now it was in a more masculine, volcanic state than ever. You even forgot to comb your hair. You did not so much as think of morning prayers. You resolved to say them twice over that night in the city. You kissed nobody good-bye. That had all been duly done the night before. Certainly! Why, parting with a kiss might cause you to miss the train. And you were determined not to miss that train, even though Aurora had almost missed you.

Of course, you arrived at the station exactly one hour before the train was due! Then you learned that the train was exactly two hours late! Then, also, you became suddenly desperate and dangerous. When the train did come, your righteous soul, with all its vexed inner workings, was going at a speed that made the engine pistons seem quite slow. And thus, in the chill gray of that distant dawn, you started upon your first visit to the city. It surpassed your wildest dreams. Like a coloured friend of my boyhood, you could not see the city for the houses! You thought everything was going helter-skelter, pell-mell. You were sure everybody was going the wrong way. You were confident, in short, that everybody in the hurrying crowds was lost. But not one was so hopelessly lost as your own dazed, miserable self. Then you had a sudden fit of homesickness. Had it not been

for the restraining hand of your older friend, the next train would have carried you homeward. A famous lawyer tells of his first day's experience in a law office. In the evening, his father asked him how he liked the law. "Not at all," he answered. "Sorry I learnt it." And you, too, were almost sorry you had seen the city!

Ah, men! that has been so many, many years ago. Time hath taught you a better lesson, I trust. It matters not whether you be country-bred or city-bred. Every Christian man knows that it is in the wise interchange of country and city, that God's purpose for humanity is being wrought out. The city needs the country, and the country needs the city. Both elements are finely commingled in Tennyson's picture of the old man before Locksley Hall:

"Can I but relive in sadness? I will turn that earlier page.
 Hide me from my deep emotion, O thou wondrous Mother-Age!
 Make me feel the wild pulsation that I felt before the strife,
 When I heard my days before me, and the tumult of my life;
 Yearning for the large excitement that the coming years
 would yield,
 Eager-hearted as a boy when first he leaves his father's field,
 And at night along the dusky highway near and nearer
 drawn,
 Sees in heaven the light of London flaring like a dreary
 dawn;
 And his spirit leaps within him to be gone before him then,
 Underneath the light he looks at, in among the throngs of
 men;

Men my brothers, men the workers, ever reaping something new;

That which they have done but earnest of the things that they shall do."

"So the woman left her water-pot, and went away into the city." Have you left yours? Have you forever parted with the smaller that the larger might have a chance in your soul? Have you made all your goings in the City of Time harmonize with the laws of the City Eternal? Are you already out in the spacious highways which lead to the City which hath the foundations, whose architect and maker is God? One night I found in one of my Bibles an old, faded letter written by a saint. The opening words are these: "My Darling Grandchildren: It has been so long since I wrote a letter, and my hands are so stiff and cramped, that I do not know how far I will get." Well, those dear old hands are no longer stiff and cramped. For sometime, now, they have been folded in divine sleep. But I think Saint John suggests how far she has gotten at last. "And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal."

So may we all get home, some sweet day, out of the Country of Time into the City of God!

XI

LIFE'S WIDENING HORIZONS (II)

"So the woman left her water-pot, and went away into the city, and saith to the people."—JOHN iv. 28.

I HAVE said, in a former sermon, that life's first horizon is the water-pot stage. Each life, whether a Galileo or a peasant, begins in a small circle. Figuratively speaking, it would answer to the circle described by a water-pot. "So the woman left her water-pot." And so does every one who gets out into the divine highways. "And went away into the city." Here is life's second horizon: the city stage. Here, also, is opportunity for exhibiting the wisdom which unites both city and country. God designs such a genuine inter-relatedness. The city needs the country, and the country needs the city. Statesmen, scientists, poets, practical business men—all are agreed upon this truth.

We come now to what I may call life's third horizon. It is the city-human stage. What is the city, anyway? What is it that lends the city its abiding significance? The questions admit of several inadequate answers. They also open the way,

I think, for the true answer, which is suggested by my text.

I

Among many inadequate answers, the first is this: The city is a place in which to get lost. Ah! it is only too true! How many have come from village and hamlet to the city just to get lost! They plunged into the roaring stream of city life and were quickly engulfed in its murk and mire! How many country boys and girls have left their water-pot circle, gone away into the city, never to be heard of by the home-folks again! Recently, I was told of a young man whose parents have been awaiting a letter for over two years. He confesses that the longed-for letter has not yet been written. Young man, go to your room and write that letter home! Such cruel neglect helps to paint your parents' locks with an unnatural whiteness. Such neglect, even more than age, brings the stoop to their shoulders and the tremble to their hands. For a broken heart is always the forerunner of a broken body.

This scene lingers in my memory: I saw three children, two boys and a girl, racing across an October wind-swept meadow. The oldest could not have been more than seven. I am sure they were little runaways. What a picture as they galloped across the browning grass! The breezes played with their locks, the sunshine kissed their faces, the laughter bubbled up from their glad, innocent

hearts. Watching them, I said: "That is, indeed, poetry on the run. That is romance in the making. That is music played by eager, joyous life." But I had another thought, also. It was this: If those darlings are runaways, as they evidently are, what about their mothers? They, at least, are not enjoying the childish frolic and rollic. What is fun for the children is the source of deep anxiety to the mothers.

So, many young men and women, both city-born and country-born, are going at a killing pace to-day. Saddest of all, they are quite unmindful of the sweet old parents at home. Yet, they helped you when you were unable to help yourselves. Now, in obedience to the laws of nature, they are becoming little children once again. You will never find, on this earth, a nobler task than to love and honour your parents in their fading years. It matters not whether they be in this city, or some other. The principle is vaster than space and time. "Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." The fundamental thing is not length of days—not that! Rather, it is honour towards parents, resting down upon the sacred gift of life from God.

Surely, it is sad to think of the multitude who say: "The city is a place to get lost in. That is what the city is. It is an immense waste, aching with human loneliness." Sometimes, I wish for

the imagination of a Dante, and the brush of a Veronese. Then I would paint one picture. I would call it: "The Angel's Visit to the Country Homes." I would portray one of God's swift-winged messengers of light, going from village to village, and from home to home. I would have him linger at each door, like the passover angel, long enough to read the sign upon the lintel and the two side posts. And I think he would see, not the stain of blood, but the stain of bitter tears. Then, too, I would have the angel enter the home and ask: "Father, Mother: Where is your son? Where is your daughter?" Then, in their kind faces, which reflect the shadow of their heartbreak, the angel could read this answer: "Where is our boy, our girl? Why, they went away to the city long ago. We have had no word from them. We sometimes fear they are dead. Or, worse still, they may be lost in sin in the great city." And perhaps, even while the angel is visiting the village homes, the city may be stirred once more by Thomas Hood's lament:

"One more unfortunate,
Weary of breath,
Rashly importunate,
Gone to her death!

"Take her up tenderly,
Lift her with care;
Fashioned so slenderly,
Young, and so fair.

* * * * *

"Loop up her tresses,
 Escaped from the comb,
 Her fair auburn tresses;
 Whilst wonderment guesses
 Where was her home?
 Who was her father?
 Who was her mother?
 Had she a sister?
 Had she a brother?
 Or was there a dearer one
 Still, or a nearer one
 Yet, than all other?

"Alas! for the rarity
 Of Christian charity
 Under the sun!
 Oh! it was pitiful,
 Near a whole city full,
 Home she had none!"

What is the city? A second inadequate answer is: The city is a place in which to have a good time. The city is a place in which to obtain the cream of civilization's conveniences. The city is a place which affords largest opportunity for self-culture. Now, as a matter of fact, a good time depends not so much upon the place as upon the person. Of course, the place-element cannot be altogether ignored, and, for wise reasons, should not be ignored. Yet place is, beyond all question, secondary. There is great truth in what a country mother wrote to her country son, now in the city: "You can't run away from trouble; for it will follow." Centuries come and go, but the old mother's

principle goes on forever. Paul had a good time in his dungeon. Nero had a bad time in his Golden House. Elijah had a good time in his cave. Ahab had a bad time in his palace. Socrates had a good time as he walked barefoot the streets of Athens and taught. Xanthippe, his wife, had a bad time anywhere, because she had a bad temper and a bad tongue. Be sure to get the person right, and you have already solved the problem of making the place right, also.

Moreover, to maintain that the city holds the utmost of convenience fails to explain the craze which is driving people to the country by the thousands. For ours is not only the socialistic, materialistic, scientific age. We must borrow yet another adjective. Ours is also the suburban age. Speaking literally, that would imply that the suburbanite lives under the city. In point of fact, he simply lives out of, or near, the city. Furthermore, to say the city affords unusual opportunity for self-culture is indisputably true. Only, once again, we cannot ignore the personal equation here, either. For, to feign the Fifth Avenue style, or to mimic the metropolitan stride, is not a very high type of culture, after all. Culture is something more than absorbing an atmosphere. As the cheek of a country maiden is the sweetheart of the sun, so culture is the ripe fruit of a fine soul. True culture lies deeper than ability to prattle off Greek hexameters, or Latin dactyls. Culture is

the perfume of a heart, not the accent of a tongue.

Now, the most cultured people I have ever known are in the city; also, the most uncultured. The most cosmopolitan people I have ever known are in the city; also, the most primitive. The best people I have ever known are in the city; also, the worst. And I may add, with equal truth, that some of the most cultured, cosmopolitan, and best people I have ever known, or ever expect to know, live in obscure country towns, and, sometimes, in the heart of the country itself. I am saying this, because the essential thing is to have one's heart right with God. There is the true source of true culture. Therein lies life's sublime goal. It matters not whether you be urban, suburban, or ruralistic. The first academic teacher of physical geography never saw a mountain with his own eyes. He probably never saw the sea, which was only a few miles from his home. The man to whom I refer is Immanuel Kant, one of the greatest philosophers of all time. Go to his grave in Königsburg, and you may read these words, from his own "Critique":

"The starry heavens above me,
The moral law within me."

Now, when the splendour of the starry heavens, and the splendour of the moral law, entwine their twin glories about the human heart, no matter how small the circle in the beginning, you will ultimately

get a life vaster than the universe, because it is an immortal spirit pulsing with the Spirit of the Uncreated God. Then, indeed, doth one understand the saying in Shakespeare's Henry VI.:

“My crown is in my heart, not on my head;
Not deck'd with diamonds and Indian stones,
Nor to be seen; my crown is called Content;
A crown it is that seldom kings enjoy.”

What is the city? A third inadequate answer runs on this wise: The city is a place to plunder. Our childhood was delighted with the story of Blücher's visit to Wellington. It was years after Waterloo. Grouchy, as you remember, failed to reach Napoleon in time. But Blücher arrived, as if guided by the finger of destiny. Well, when Blücher came to London, Wellington was showing him the city. Finally, he took him to the dome of St. Paul's. The iron-hearted German looked out over magnificent, dingy London town. Then he looked at Wellington. The Duke observed in Blücher's eye the same wild fire he had seen burning there once before. It was when, after Waterloo, Blücher marched upon Paris. He was determined to destroy the French capital for revenge. But he was restrained by Wellington himself. So, as Blücher viewed London from the top of St. Paul's, the old lust of conquest returned. With the flaming blood of pugnacious generations shooting

through his veins, Blücher exclaimed: "What a city to plunder!"

Alas! too many men have so viewed our cities! And they have not ascended some Christian cathedral to get their vantage point, either. They have descended into the underworld. They have kindled the passions of the populace into a frenzy. They have injected a spasm of political poison into the body politic. They have arrayed the criminal poor against the poor rich. In so doing, they have made it harder for the Christian rich to help the rich poor. Meantime, the question of the Son of God knocks at the heart of every man. I say *every man*—not a *money-mad man*, nor yet a *moneyless man*! But a man, a God-created, God-imaged man! "For what shall a man be profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and forfeit his life? or what shall a man give in exchange for his life?" Man is the shekinah of God. Man is an "emotion of Deity flashed into time." What of the man who destroys that shekinah? What of the man who kills that emotion? What profit can there be in forfeiting life, even though rocks were melted into liquid diamonds and flowed like a golden river into the soul? When life has been exchanged for anything—for worldly position, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes—how shall life be gotten back again?

II

No: the city is not a place in which to get lost. The city is not a place in which to merely have a good time. The city is not a place to be plundered. What, then, are the city's chief assets? Skyscrapers? Fine streets? Art galleries? Colleges? Church buildings? Railways? Ships? Why, these are things. These are tools. These are the city's material clothing. We must go deeper to find the throbbing heart of the city. So, my text reveals the city's true glory or shame. "The woman left her water-pot, and went away into the city, and saith to the *people*." The people are primary. Things are secondary. Bad people will put good things to bad uses. Good people will put all things to noble uses.

Now, broadly speaking, two kinds of people compose every city. First, bad people who may become good. Secondly, good people who ought to become better. The Gospel corrects and improves these two classes. And they have always been in the world. They are both ancients and moderns. The Gospel proposes to make them *eternals*—timeless citizens of time, in the world but not of it, owning the world but not mastered by it, both serving the world and finding in it, also, an opportunity of working out their own salvation.

First, then, there are the bad people who may become good. The Gospel assumes that every

human being belongs in this category. "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." One of the fundamental principles of the law is: Every man is assumed to be innocent until proven guilty. The justness, I think, of such a principle must be patent to all. It insures every prisoner an impartial trial. But the Gospel plainly reverses this order. It says: Every man is bad until he is made good by the grace of God. Naturally, and sometimes wisely, we classify sinners. God doubtless does the same in His own wise way. But back of all relative classifications there is, according to the Gospel, a common level. It is named sin. Now, Christ, the sinless Saviour, descends to this common level and lifts the whole Godward. Herein is the value of the angel's appearance unto Joseph in a dream. "Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she shall bring forth a son; and thou shalt call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins."

Bad men! Why, the world is full of bad men who may become good. Let us not try to hide their badness behind their capacity for goodness. That is not the Gospel method. Neither let us overlook their capacity for goodness because it is buried beneath a great weight of badness. For that is not the Gospel's majestic way, either. Above all things, let us be merciful by being true. Always, the most unmerciful Gospel is the false, perverted

Gospel. Let us be sympathetic by being fair. Let us be truly loving by being truly honest in these high matters of destiny. Let us be real rescuers because there are real dangers to be rescued from. Let us be enthusiastic exponents of mighty joys, because there are, indeed, mighty joys to be expounded. As disciples of Christ, we know nothing of emaciated theories. We are the custodians of unspeakable experiences. Our glorious life-task is just this: To prove that we are sinners saved by grace by helping to save unsaved sinners out of their sinful place. Ah! there is no place of peace in the universe for a spirit that wilfully clings to sin. There is, on the contrary, no place where peace may not be had, if sin be repented of, and forsaken, through Christ Jesus. And this is equally true of London's East End and West End, of New York's Bowery and Fifth Avenue, of Brooklyn's Brownsville and Park Slope. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." That is the scientific, philosophic, prophetic cry of human history. "These things have I spoken unto you, that in Me ye may have peace. In the world ye have tribulation: but be of good cheer: I have overcome the world." That is the full-toned music of God's Gospel of Eternal Glory!

The second class in every city are the good people who ought to be better. It was said of Dale, of Birmingham: "He lived under the benignant sway of a succession of great truths, following one an-

other like the constellations of the heavens." That is just where we ought to be living, my brethren. We ought to be increasingly under the benignant sway of the imperial facts and forces. We ought to have streaming into our being, moment by moment, the radiance which bursts from heaven's own splendour-founts. We ought to be athletes out on the eternal roadways, enlarging our spiritual capaciousness. Herein is life, abundant, abounding, eternal life, lived here and now, increased yonder and then. No word of truth spoken by you, no act of kindness done by you, no dream of goodness dreamed by you, no smile of hope smiled by you, no tear of sympathy shed by you, can ever be lost. The universe is a vast harp, souls are the strings, God is the harper. Thoughts, aspirations, loves—all glowing truths, all sacrificial tasks, all fine nobilities—these are the tunes which forever flow from the universal harp, strung with human strings, and swept by divine fingers.

My dear old schoolmaster recently wrote me a letter which I prize more than precious gems. After saying that his youngest son is now a junior in the University of North Carolina, he added: "He makes the eighth child I have sent to the university. That is my hope of a useful life." And that hope, thank God, shall neither fade nor fail. For, all over this broad land, are scattered children of the twin spirits of himself and his noble brother. For forty years they have prepared boys for col-

lege and university, but uppermost and supremely, for life, for destiny. Turning, after reading the letter, to my notebook on the life of Arnold of Rugby, I found these words "It was not the master who was beloved or disliked for the sake of the school, but the school was beloved or disliked for the sake of the master. Whatever peculiarity of character was impressed on the scholars whom it sent forth, was derived not from the genius of the place, but from the genius of the man. Throughout, whether in the school itself, or in its after effects, the one image we have before us is not Rugby, but *Arnold*."

Now, the genius of a teacher, a preacher, a lawyer, a surgeon, a poet, is something in whose presence we instinctively uncover. Genius is at once the gift and mystery of God clothed in human form. But when a positive genius for goodness is united with a positive genius in any given direction, you have the two supremest and sublimest combinations the All-glorious God ever beheld upon the earth. Comparatively few of us are endowed with great genius. But every one may assert the genius of goodness. The genius of goodness is the divine aureole without which the genius of brilliance will burn to the socket of its own sputtering sparkle. Ah! let us thirst after the genius of goodness. That, after all, is the richly fulfilling thing in human life. For, as Arnold himself nobly says: "If there is one thing on earth which is truly admirable, it is

to see God's wisdom blessing an inferiority of natural powers, where they have been honestly, truly, and zealously cultivated."

Oh, the mingled wonder and glory and mystery of life! "So the woman left her water-pot." We begin in a circle smaller than that tiny black dot named a period. But Deity burns at the centre of the dot. That is why the circumference may take on measureless magnificence. "And went away into the city." The city is not defined in terms of stone and steel and dollars and diamonds. These are the city's clothing. They are valuable because they register the condition of the heart that beats within them. "And saith to the people." These are the living creatures, like a fire infolding itself, which light with brightness or shame the city's splendour and gloom.

What kind of people are we? What is the quality of our manhood and womanhood? Answer me these questions truly and bravely, and I will sing you a song of "The Waiting City." Just six months before entering it, Phillips Brooks wrote the song out there on the ship plowing the great deep. One time I remember well the song refreshed my thirsty soul with its delicious sweetness. I was out in the vast open spaces of being. My feet were on the meadow and my dreams had gotten in behind the stars. The day was dying into the dark. Mystic whisperings were shaken through the atmosphere. I was saying over and over again those

golden words of George Borrow: "The wind is on the heather, brother: life is sweet." I looked up, and the evening star threw its silver kisses right down into my face. I looked back, and the full-orbed moon shot its old familiar glory right across my path. I looked up and out and around, and underneath the evening star and the full moon, there lay a many-coloured sea, whose amber, violet, hyacinthine waves washed all the shores of night. I thought the musical colour-sea was chanting a requiem for the dead sunset. It was then and there that Brooks' song stole into my heart like a rhythm of unearthly peace:

"A city throned upon the height behold,
 Wherein no foot of man as yet has trod;
 The City of Man's Life fulfilled in God.
 Bathed all in light, with open gates of gold,
 Perfect the City is in tower and street;
 And there a Palace for each mortal waits,
 Complete and perfect, at whose outer gates
 An Angel stands its occupant to greet.
 Still shine, O patient City on the height,
 The while our race in hut and hovel dwells.
 It hears the music of thy heavenly bells
 And its dull soul is haunted by thy light.
 Lo, once the Son of Man hath heard thy call
 And the dear Christ hath claimed thee for us all."

XII

TRUE PROSPERITY

"Beloved, I pray that in all things thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth."—3 JOHN 2.

DECEMBER is the June-time of winter. No matter whether the season be mild or stormy, whether icicles or sunbeams greet the eye, whether blasts or breezes drum upon the ear, the closing days of December always bring the joyful tears of April to human eyes, and the golden breath of June to human hearts. When January officiates at the funeral of December, the Christmas afterglow is still burning softly in the hearts of men, women, and children. This is because soul-doors have just been opened to let their tender tokens of love fly up and down the world, every gift ringing out the music of the angels: "Peace on earth, good will to men." While no happier words than "A Merry Christmas to You!" ever got spilled over human lips, it may also be said that, in the annals of time, they can have no worthier successors than those fine, brave, hopeful words: "A Prosperous New Year to You!" We have heard them so often—some of us more often than

others, of course—that it is possible for custom to stale their infinite variety and rich suggestiveness.

What does a prosperous New Year mean anyway? Does it mean that we are all to get healthy, wealthy, and wise? Does it mean that some of us are to grow fat, while others are to grow lean? Does it mean that we are to have one long May-day throughout the year? Does it mean that never a cloud shall darken our horizon, never a tear wet the lashes of our eyes, never a pain-throb shoot through our hearts, never a sob of agony wrench the soul? If a prosperous New Year means simply that, and nothing more, then I have no sermon for you, and my text has no message for you. But if, on the other hand, a prosperous New Year means to catch step with God before December is dead and January is born, and to keep that step until all time's Junes and Decembers roll into the timeless glory of the heavenly morning, then we may hark back to Saint John's great New Year prayer with profit: "Beloved, I pray that in all things thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth."

And may I say just here that this is a complete prayer? It is short, but there is nothing fragmentary about it. It gathers within its mighty hands the body, the soul, business, life, death, earth, time, and lifts them all up before the throne of

grace. There are only two brief petitions. But they are as all-inclusive in the spiritual realm as the ether is in the physical. First, it is a prayer for temporal prosperity; and, second, it is a prayer for temporal prosperity, limited and measured by soul prosperity.

I

A Prayer for Temporal Prosperity: "Beloved, I pray that in all things thou mayest prosper and be in health." It has been said of a great modern preacher that he did not so much bring truth home to the people, as he brought the people home to the truth. It is a rare, a blessed art, indeed, and one in which St. John excels. And the first element of temporal prosperity he brings us home to is what we call, in modern parlance, success in business. "I pray that in all things thou mayest prosper," the Greek for prosper (*euodousthai*) meaning, literally, "Have a good career."

I like this sovereign note in this king of religious mystics. John touched the depths and heights, lengths and breadths of the unseen world as few men have. It seemed natural for him to trail spiritual splendours, because the fine constitution of his soul was native to otherworldliness. And yet, it is this man who comes down out of the clouds, picks up so commonplace, dry-as-dust a thing as business with his radiant spiritual fingers, holds it up to the lips of his soul, and rains down upon

it a musical flood of prayer-kisses: "Beloved, I pray that in business thou mayest have a good career."

Now, it seems to me, that John is never more thoroughly Christian than right here. Christianity is in profound sympathy with business. The fact is, that in true Christianity it is impossible for a man to divorce his work and his religion. If a man's business is legitimate, then in God's sight it is worthy of a man's putting his religion, his soul into it, that he may get more religion and a larger soul out of it. This is what Browning meant when he said:

"I count life just the stuff
To try my soul's strength on, educe the man.
Who keeps one end in view makes all things serve."

It is only a mutilated form, a poor, stammering parody on Christianity that stands aloof from business. For business also spells spiritual opportunity. It is the stuff to try the soul's strength on, lead out the man and crown him with imperial self-mastery. Joan of Arc found France disconcerted, aimless, and tottering to ruin. The historian says "she saw the possibility of a great French nation, self-centred, self-sufficient, and she so stamped this message on the French heart that its characters have never faded." In one short year she poured the full tide of her young life into the national heart of France, which gave her "glory, exaltation,

wreckage, and captivity." But at the end of that year France stood upon her feet, "a conscious nation with an anointed king, and the work of deliverance was assured." And as the Maid of Orleans saw in her dreams a patriotic, puissant nation rising out of disaster and defeat, so Christianity sees in every worthy vocation, in every essential business, the opportunity of developing a true, clean, strong, manly soul!

So, then, Christianity is interested in the business success of individuals and nations. And just in proportion as both obey the laws of Christ, just so far and no farther do men and nations produce that wealth of treasure which moth cannot corrupt, and which thieves cannot steal. You might as well hang a New Year resolution over the December sun and tell it not to shine, as to individually or nationally violate Christ's laws of righteousness and ask them not to bring the harvest of wrong, injustice, suffering, and shame sown by the black hand of spiritual anarchy!

The second element in John's prayer for temporal prosperity is physical health: "I pray that in all things thou mayest prosper and be in health." Surely, this second note is even more important than the first. I hazard nothing in saying that health is of far greater importance than success in business. It is possible that men in the riotous vigor of abounding health may question this statement. But a brief period of invalidism, I am sure,

would bring them round to an appreciation of true values.

Let us confess that there is a compelling fascination in the contribution which confirmed invalids, walking and toiling amid fiery furnaces of pain, have made to the work of the world. When I think of Athanasius, with his kingly soul married to his emaciated body, repeatedly driven into exile by enemies and popes, becoming a veritable wanderer upon the face of the earth, until Hooker said this eloquent invalid, the "Father of Orthodoxy," had "no friend but God and death"; when I think of Bernard of Clairvaux, unable to take food into his frail bodily house for days at a time, yet so mighty in his holiness and so commanding in his intellectual endowments that his dark, monkish cell became the spot where popes were manufactured and kings set up or put down; when I think of Richard Baxter, sending forth from his prison house of pain "one hundred and sixty-eight ponderous volumes, and a vast mass of unpublished manuscripts," many of which were written in noisome jails and places of refuge from the cruel hand of persecution; when I think of Shaftesbury, founder of the long line of English nobility which flowered into that knightly soul and friend of London's poor children in the nineteenth century—when I think of the elder Shaftesbury, born a cripple, unable to move about without a servant and a crutch, and yet a great statesman, the counsellor of

Oliver Cromwell and Charles II., who said that he knew more law than all his judges and more divinity than all his bishops; when I think of these majestic souls and the great host, living and dead, like them, notwithstanding Darwin's statement that if he had not been so great an invalid he should not have done nearly so much, I raise the question: "What might they not have done, all things being equal, if they had had strong bodies and been in physical health?" What Carlyle, whom Professor Mathews calls a Prometheus with a vulture forever at his heart, once said to the students of Edinburgh is not only sterling common sense, but a vital element of Christianity. "There is no kind of achievement you could make in the world," said the Scotchman, "that is equal to perfect health. What to it are nuggets or millions?"

These two things, then, business and health, Saint John thought important enough to pray over. For, if all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy, all work and no prayer makes man a thin, lean soul. And no genuinely prosperous New Year can cross the life-path of any man or woman who does not imitate the apostle. When a good woman said to me that she sometimes thought herself foolish for praying over the commonplace deeds of her life, I answered: "No! there is no foolishness about that. That is the wisdom of a life that has been keyed to spiritual harmonies, which drop their music down upon what men unwisely call the commonplaces of

existence." Emerson said when he read the poets he thought nothing new could be said about morning or evening. "But," he added, "when I see the day break I am not reminded of Homeric and Chaucerian pictures. I am cheered by the moist, warm, glittering, budding, melodious hour that breaks down the narrow walls of my soul, and extends its life and pulsations to the very horizon." If you have come, through the experiences of this dying year, to regard your business and health as narrow walls over which your soul can get no vast outlook and uplook, just carry them up into the mount of prayer! And both shall be transfigured in that holy atmosphere. There shall be an abundant answer to John's petition: "Beloved, I pray that in all things thou mayest prosper and be in health."

II

I said at the outset that this is a prayer for temporal prosperity, limited and measured by soul prosperity. While it would be pleasant to continue to emphasize the idea of temporal prosperity unconditionally, I should be unfaithful to you and to my text, if I ignored the clearly expressed condition upon which true prosperity is possible. "Beloved, I pray that in all things thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth." In other words, Gaius, to whom this beautiful epistle was written, was so sane, so fine, so well-poised, so

spiritually prosperous, that he suggested to Saint John an ideal standard of temporal prosperity. Gaius's spiritual thermometer registered a very high temperature. So John thought it worth while to pray that his friend might have some of earth's good things to even matters up a little.

Now, the underlying principle of the text is this: There must be some proportion between temporal prosperity and soul prosperity, else there can be no true, well-balanced prosperity in either case. And this is a law which metes out an impartial justice to all of us. Say what we will, things are to a large extent—not wholly, nor perfectly—evened up here and now. I know we often feel, with Mrs. Browning, that “the curious thing in this world is not the stupidity, but the upper-handism of the stupidity. The geese are in the Capitol, and the Romans in the farmyard—and it seems to all quite natural that it should be so, both to geese and Romans”!

But in the long run, this law of spiritual proportion, regardless of the help or hindrance of men, has a sure way of driving the geese back to the farmyard, while it quietly invites the spiritual Romans to enter in and possess the Capitol. Judas may act the traitor in Gethsemane, staining the Face of Truth with a hiss and a kiss; but this violated law makes a noose for his neck, because he had already committed spiritual suicide. Pilate may wash his hands in innocence before the blood-

thirsty mob; but in condemning Christ he passes everlasting condemnation upon himself. Herod's bloody despotism may rest upon the broken hearts of mothers and mangled bodies of little children; he may even treat the Son of God with contempt and set Him at naught; he may evade the frown of imperial Rome and trample every vestige of right under his iron foot! But, at last, this law of spiritual proportion lays its unrelenting hands upon Herod's swollen figure and casts him down to death.

Why, the Park Row newsboys do not ignore this law. Every now and then we hear tales of heroism coming from that humble world that thrill our souls. Sometime ago when a man called out to a newsboy to bring him a *Sun*, the lad refused. "Why not?" said the man. "You've got them. I heard you a minute ago cry them loud enough to be heard to the City Hall." "Yes, but that was down t'other block, ye know, where I hollered." "What does that matter? Come, now, no fooling; hand me out a paper. I'm in a hurry." "Couldn't sell you no paper in this here block, mister, cos if b'longs to Limpy. He's just up to the funder end now; you'll meet him." "And who is Limpy? And why does he have this especial block?" "Cos us other kids agreed to let him have it. Ye see, it's a good run on 'count of the offices all along, and the poor chap is that lame he can't get around lively like the rest of us, so we agreed that the

first one caught sellin' on his beat should be lit on an' thrashed. See?" "Yes, I do see," said the man. "So you newsboys have a sort of brotherhood among yourselves?" "I don't know what ye call it," answered the ragged urchin. "But we're goin' to look out for a little cove what's lame, anyhow, you bet!" Truly, here is a kind of prosperity whose spiritual music must be echoed and re-echoed, until its mighty strains are caught up by the silver bells in the morning land of glory, and repeated to the inhabitants of that City whose walls are jasper, whose gates are pearl, whose streets are gold!

Moreover, it is because of this underlying principle of proportion, that we conclude that temporal prosperity, independent of soul prosperity, is not prosperity at all, but a calamity. "For what shall a man be profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and forfeit his life? or what shall a man give in exchange for his life?" How shall he get his life back again, no matter how prosperous he may have been in business and physical energy, once he has bartered his life away for the things he can see and handle? This question came to Saint Crispin in the early part of the fourth century, in that final and terrible struggle between Christianity and paganism, during the reign of the Emperor Diocletian. Though a Roman senator, nourished amid luxury, and dandled in the lap of gilded vice, Saint Crispin, through the influence of humble missionaries of the

Nazarene, faced this question of soul prosperity. As a result, he renounced his sin, place, position, property, went into Gaul, and devoted himself to shoe-making and soul-making. He succeeded so well in the one that the great trade of shoe-making is designated from Saint Crispin; while in the other his soul became so pure and white that the persecutor's axe rested not until it was dyed with the martyr's blood!

Suppose that there should be an impartial administration of this great law to-day. Suppose that here, in Brooklyn, the temporal prosperity of men should be measured by their spiritual prosperity. Do we not know that there would be some tremendous changes before sundown? I am quite sure that there are temporal and spiritual millionaires wearing the same pair of shoes, and who regard their bank accounts as secondary to the health of their souls. Yet I have no scruples in saying that some who have abundance this moment would be begging bread before night. People who are running automobiles this minute would be running wheelbarrows to-morrow. Men who could write their checks for small sums and large ones to-day, would not be able to pay for a two-cent stamp on Monday morning. If this law should go into effect to-day, I fear that Brooklyn would witness such a May-day moving on this last Sunday of December as she never knew in all her history. Why, if it should be decreed that every family must move to-

day into a house commensurate with their soul prosperity, some of the folks we never think of speaking to would be so high-toned to-morrow that they would not even look at us! They would move out of their shacks into mansions. They would move out of their cellars into palaces. They would put off their faded shawls and put on the gowns of queens. They would cast off their patched-up rags and put on the finest broadcloth. They would stop pinching and starving and economizing, week in and week out, to make all ends meet, and sit down and write checks on boundless stores of gleaming gold. They would throw away their crust and eat ambrosial food fit for the gods. They would exchange their tired, worn bodies for figures struck through with the buoyancy of immortal youth.

But you say: "I wouldn't like for that law to go into effect at once. I'd like to make some preparations first." But the law is already in effect. It was in effect before you were born, before Christmas began to be, before New Years began to multiply on the calendar of time. It is the law inwoven with the very nature of God, of soul, of spirit. At last, we shall move into a house not made by the architects of temporal prosperity, but by the architects of the soul. And that house shall be large or small, beautiful or ugly, a joy or a curse, an honour or a disgrace, according as we build in the years of earth and time!

And so, beloved, my prayer for you is, that in all things you may prosper and be in health, even as your souls prosper. If, on this last Sunday of the old year, we will but enrobe our souls in the truth of this prayer, with a chastening sense of failure in many ways we shall still bid farewell to the old and greet the New Year with radiant, morning faces; "for morning faces make a morning world." While up among the Alps at sunrise Drummond once declared: "I just laughed aloud." And one who heard him say it says: "I know why he laughed aloud. He laughed because he felt that the snow robe was simply the white garment of the King, and that through the vesture he could touch his Lord. He felt that the strength of the hills, as the Psalmist says, is His also, and that revolutionized Nature."

And I want you to experience this burst of inward laughter this morning. I want you to feel that, whether you walk lonely Gethsemanes of trial, or tread Alpine summits of joy, that all through the experiences of the coming year, you may not only touch the white garments of your King, but you may actually trust yourselves to His perfect leadership. I want you to realize that, while scattering "the golden dust of time," you are engaged in a high and serious business. But after all is said and done, I want you to realize, also, that you are neither creatures of a day, a year, nor of all time. You belong to that God in whose reckoning "one

day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." The worst the years can do for you is to bring you home to God, while the best the years can do for you only being at home forever can answer. I want us to get something of the soul-breadth and moral passion of that martyr hero, William McLaughlin, who died in the Chicago Iroquois Theatre fire. A few hours before the fire he asked his uncle, Dr. Frank W. Gunsaulus, what was the text of his sermon for the morrow, which was Sunday. Dr. Gunsaulus quoted his text: "But for this cause came I unto this hour." He said he intended to show how God prepared each life for some definite purpose. Young McLaughlin left the house. Walking past the ill-fated Iroquois Theatre, in which his uncle was announced to preach, he stepped in. While standing by the door, the alarm of fire was given, and McLaughlin was one of the first to reach the street. But he went back, and up into the gallery, to assist the women and children. While helping others over that bridge of life and death, running from the theatre to the Northwestern University Law School, he was so badly burned that he was finally carried over himself in a dying condition. The physician who first saw McLaughlin, Dr. Philip S. Doane, says that as he came to help him, the dying boy asked that others might be cared for first, saying: "I am strong and can wait." He was taken to the Presbyterian Hospital, where he lived for

twenty-eight hours, conscious to the end, near which he whispered: "I understand now why I was born. 'But for this cause—but for this cause, came I unto this hour.'"

Oh, brothers, if we start down the strange path of the New Year with the majesty of a great cause—even the cause of souls determined to prosper in spiritual things—sweeping its divine music through the halls of our being, it will matter little whether we say good-night to old years, or good morning to new ones. For our souls shall live in a realm lifted high above all the years—in the timeless glory of the unchanging and unaging God, the Father of Spirits!

XIII

CÆSAR'S SAINTS

"All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Cæsar's household."—PHILIPPIANS iv. 22.

HISTORY holds no more interesting story than the civilization of Greece and Rome. Their best days will forever stand as the landmarks of a mental aristocracy which is supreme. Indeed, it is doubtful whether a higher intellectual standard will ever again be attained. Their philosophy, their laws, their arts, their literature have challenged the admiration of the ages. They were the architects of a temple of learning whose walls have heard the cry which has voiced the mental hunger of the generations. In that temple there were rooms many and vast, and every room was presided over by men of the first order of genius.

There was the hall of philosophy, where Socrates and Plato, Cicero and Epictetus wrestled with the deepest problems of the soul. There was the drawing-room of history, where Herodotus and Xenophon, Livy and Tacitus recited the story of the past. There was the courtroom of jurisprudence,

where were heard the weighty deliberations of Draco and Solon, Justinian and Paulus. There was the singing-room of poetry, where the stream of song burst forth in classic melody, the notes varying in tone from the thrilling epic to the thunderous tragedy—the room where Homer and Vergil, Pindar and Horace, Sophocles and Plautus lifted their voices in undying music. There was the forum of eloquence, where Demosthenes and Æschines, Cicero and Hortensius sent forth their stately periods of golden speech. There was the studio of sculpture, where Phidias and Praxiteles chiselled their thoughts in marbles of faultless mould. There was the gallery of painting, where Zeuxis, whose grapes were so perfect that birds pecked them, and Apelles, whose Venus, rising from the foam, was so flawless that the “falling drops of water from her hair gave the appearance of a transparent silver veil over her form,” imprisoned in colour some of the rarest creations of the painter’s art.

What a temple was this, with its splendid proportions, towering into the utmost sky of human genius! Viewed from a human standpoint, such a temple should have stood for ever. Viewed from a divine standpoint, it was impossible for it to stand longer than the forces of its own making were fully set to work. With all of its polished grandeur and classic beauty, it lacked just one thing to give it permanence—the religion

of the one true God. They worshipped lords many and gods many, but the God of the universe, the Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they worshipped not. Fell? Of course that temple fell, and great was the fall thereof. The sound of its crashing ruin has come roaring down the aisles of time, telling the story of the dying agony of dead empires in tones as mournful as thundering billows lashing the shores of a rockbound coast! Thus passed away this magnificent temple of civilization, begun by the Greeks, finished by the Romans, and destroyed by Paganism.

This brilliant epoch in the calendar of history interests us just now because our text has its setting in the closing days of its existence. The student of history observes that God teaches not only through individuals, but that nations, empires, centuries, and epochs are His teachers also. Therefore, the history of the rise and progress of Græco-Roman civilization is not more interesting than the lesson of its fall is valuable for us. Briefly stated, the lesson is this: it is out of harmony with the nature of things for a nation to long endure which takes no account of God. God demands recognition of a very definite character in the affairs of nations as well as individuals. To shut God out is to deliberately enter upon the work of self-destruction, which paganism ultimately accomplished. Christianity arrived upon the scene just in time to flash its golden light into this era of ap-

palling darkness, just in time to set down a few genuinely live human beings in the midst of this graveyard of pagan corpses. Chief among them was Saint Paul, who wrote to the Philippians: "All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Cæsar's household."

I

Then there were saints in Cæsar's household? Paul says there were, and that means they were worthy of their name. They must have been saints of large stature, saints from principle, because a saint in that age of cruelty and crime was one who placed a premium upon his head. This being true, our study will be valuable if it helps us to lay hold of the fact that one can be what he wants to be, under God, though walled in on all sides by the most unpropitious circumstances.

Now, when we remember who the head of Cæsar's household was, it is a task to mention the word saint in the same breath. This Nero was the last of the Cæsars, and the most infamous of all. Indeed, it is questionable if the combined infamy of all the others would furnish a parallel for this monster. Once at least the devil succeeded in realizing his conception of a man. In Nero, hell's ideal stood forth clothed in all the dusky deviltry of the lower regions. The more one studies this fiend, the more is he willing to believe that new

and strange forces of evil were enlisted in his making. Naturally, therefore, we turn to his father and mother, a glance at whom will satisfy our inquiry.

The name of Nero's father was Domitius. According to Suetonius, the dominant characteristic of Domitius was a cruelty bordering upon brutality. Riding in his chariot along the Appian Way, he came upon a poor, helpless boy. With fiendish glee he applied the lash to his horses, and purposely ran the boy down, crushing him under his chariot wheels. When friends congratulated him on Nero's birth, Domitius said that "nothing but what was pernicious and detestable to the public could ever be produced of him and Agrippina." Never before or since, perhaps, was Domitius so near the realm of truth as when he made that statement. So, we are led to believe that Nero's sire was a part of the fountain whence flowed the corruption that lodged in the son.

Turning to the mother, we find, if possible, an improved edition of deviltry. Agrippina was a shrewd, cunning, cruel, ambitious woman, who allowed nothing to deter her in the accomplishment of her designs. She was an ulcer of impurity exuding streams of filth. Placed by the side of Agrippina, Lady Macbeth shines as an angel of light, and Clytemnestra as a paragon of virtue! The skirts of her soul were defiled by nameless crimes. She was so vile that she even gloated over

incestuous passions towards her imbruted and unnatural son.

With such a parentage, we are prepared to believe Nero capable of anything in the category of crime. Seneca tells us that, as a boy, Nero was the slave of violent passions. Possessing a malignant genius for cruelty, this capacity developed with the advancing years. Among other crimes, he murdered his mother, two wives, poisoned his rival, Britannicus, and had his old tutor, Seneca, blooded to death. Disguised as a highwayman, he often went about Rome on tours of robbery, committing the most outrageous crimes. He was cured of this, however, when he came upon a man who knew how to deal with highwaymen, beating the emperor within an inch of his life. His extravagance was surpassed only by his cruelty. If Caligula drank pearls dissolved in vinegar, Nero shod his mules with silver. He never wore the same garment twice. His Golden House was a marvel of extravagance and splendour. Its porch was so high that it contained a statue of Nero 120 feet in height. The space within it was large enough to take in triple porticos a mile in length, and a silver lake surrounded it with buildings resembling a city. Within its area were vineyards, pastures, cornfields, and woods, containing large numbers of tame and wild animals. Parts of the Golden House were overlaid with gold and mother-of-pearl. The banqueting room was built in circular

form, revolving ceaselessly night and day, imitating the motions of the planets. After dedicating it, Nero said: "I now have a dwelling fit for a man." And he might have added: "But I have no man fit for the dwelling."

This, then, was the man at the head of the household in which Saint Paul says there were saints! Is there a godless man at the head of your household, and does he make you feel you cannot be a disciple of Christ? Then fix your eyes upon this picture of Cæsar's household. Remember the monster at the head of it, recall the fortitude it required to be a Christian, and take courage in the fact that what God's grace could do for the men and women of Cæsar's age, that grace can accomplish in the men and women of this age, also. In your fight for a high-toned spiritual life remember this: "All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Cæsar's household."

II

Consider, also, that it was an age of despotism. Absolute power was vested in the emperor. Did a man want office? He saw the emperor. Did he desire a commission in the army? He saw the emperor. Did he wish to enter the Senate? He saw the emperor. Did he wish to be religious, according to the religion of that day? He saw the emperor. Did he want to keep his head on his shoulders? He saw the emperor. All authority was

lodged in the emperor, and the result was a galling, grinding despotism. Opposing the emperor meant death. Human rights were trampled under foot, and liberty was unknown.

Is it any wonder that great men were rare? Patriotism was dead, for lofty spirits died with the republic. During the republic there could be found a Cicero to indict a Catiline for his villainy. But now tyranny had stolen eloquence from the voice and principle from the life. Men had lost the spirit of heroism. They were weak and effeminate. Gibbon says if they "sailed in their gilded galleys to their elegant villas, especially if it was a hot day, they compared these expeditions to the marches of Cæsar and Alexander; but if a fly presumed to settle on the silken folds of their gilded umbrellas, if a sunbeam penetrated through an unguarded chink, they deplored their intolerable hardships, and lamented, in affected language, that they were not born in the regions of eternal darkness." Truly, Roman manhood was but a memory. Despotism had slain manly principles, leaving men who were only parodies on manhood.

And yet the mightiest character, next to the Son of God, that ever lived on this planet, could be found right there in Rome in that age of despotism. He never sat upon the throne of the Cæsars, but the fact that he was a prisoner in the Mamertine prison has flooded that dungeon with a glory such as the Cæsars' throne never knew. In that dark,

noisome hole under the ground Paul built a throne upon the principles of Jesus Christ; and from that throne mandates were issued which have shaken the kingdoms of the world and transformed civilizations. In that age of absolutism there were some who had come into harmony with a will which was above the will of the emperor. They struggled up the heights, all gory and bespattered with blood, to lock hands with the Man of Calvary. Counting their lives not dear unto themselves, they sowed the crimson seed of martyrdom, and the Church is the glorious harvest. What a kingly privilege to hear their salutation ringing down the ages! In your efforts to scale the unclouded peaks of Christian character: "All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Cæsar's household."

III

Moreover, Nero's age was distinguished for its gluttony. The stomach ruled the brain. Schools of carving superseded schools of philosophy. A great eater was rated higher than a great thinker. Cooking was a serious matter in the closing days of the Roman empire. They ate everything, from water-rats to white worms; from snails to pheasants; from peacocks to singing birds; from oysters to wild boars. Great was the glutton, and his greatness grew with his increased capacity for gluttony. One day Pompey and Cicero dropped in on

Lucullus for dinner. Intending to surprise their host, they were willing to take whatever scraps were left over from breakfast. But Lucullus put them down to a \$4,000 meal, served on table-couches of purple and vessels flashing with jewels. History tells of Apicius, the champion glutton of his day. He had a fortune of one hundred and ten millions of sesterces. Squandering all but ten millions in gluttony, the poor fellow feared starvation and committed suicide. In addition to their gluttony there was an idolatrous worship of tables and vessels. Even Cicero paid \$3,250 for his banqueting-table. And Cicero was not considered an extravagant man. Of course, he liked nice things! Crassus gave \$4,000 for a golden cup. Drusillus owned a dish made of 500 pounds' weight of silver. Not to be outdone, Vitellius had one made so large that he had to have a furnace built for its special use. We are told that he gave a feast in honour of this dish, which was by no means empty. In it were the brains of peacocks, the livers of fish, the tongues of parrots, and the roes of lampreys from the Carpathian sea.

But while gluttony was the rule in that dark era; while the brain was slave to the stomach; while men mocked the gods to worship tables and the vessels upon them; while a higher estimate was placed upon a big eater than upon a big thinker, remember, also, that there were men and women who lived in diviner altitudes, walked loftier heights of be-

ing, drew the breath of purer atmospheres, because they fed upon the Bread of Life. In an age of unequalled gluttony, Paul's greeting rang loud and strong: "All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Cæsar's household."

IV

Consider, too, that the saints in Cæsar's household lived in a period of abject slavery. Earth never witnessed such a system of slavery as Rome had. A single palace often required hundreds of slaves. Of the one hundred and twenty millions of population, it is estimated that half of them were slaves. The slave was denied both social and political rights. He could not contract legal marriage, make a will, or inherit property. He was the tool of his master. After toiling all day, he was thrust into a subterranean cell at night. Crossing his master's will, he was crucified or tortured. It is said a slave once murdered a man of consular dignity, whereupon all the slaves he owned were put to death. Slaves not only did the manual labor, they plied the mechanical arts also. Moreover, they were found in the professions—they were musicians, actors, secretaries, and schoolmasters. They were brought from Syria, the African deserts, Asia Minor, and Greece. Think of an educated Greek obeying the commands of a brutal Roman, and that without thanks or remuneration!

But in the midst of that age of unparalleled slavery, forget not that there were Christian freemen. Their Declaration of Independence had been drawn up on the Judean hills: "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free, indeed." Paul had caught up this message from the lips of the Son of God, carried it across the mountains and seas, and proclaimed it in the slave-marts of Nero. Like a melody from other spheres, it ravished their hearts and strengthened their souls. It lifted them above the rack, the dungeon, the lion's paw, and the headsman's axe. They were true freemen, singing the birthday song of a heavenly liberty. Therefore, Paul wrote to the Philippian Christians: "All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Cæsar's household."

v

Think of the female degradation of Nero's time. In the healthier days of the republic, when the simple life was more highly prized, womanhood was respected. But those days were gone. A comparatively healthy republic had been supplanted by an empire sick unto death, rotten to the core, and hastening to its downfall. Little wonder that woman should be caught in its viperous clutches, spoiled of her glory, and shorn of her dignity. The strength of a nation is largely measured by its attitude toward womanhood. In a wholesome age

she is the flower, the reigning queen—the sweetheart, the wife, the mother; in an unwholesome age she is the victim, the slave, the toy of villainous men. And such she was in Cæsar's time. Her education was neglected, if considered at all. She was regarded as man's inferior socially. Her home was her prison. Given in marriage without her consent, she was divorced without her consent. The marriage relation was valuable only as it ministered to the selfish interests of man. Did the woman have plenty of money? Then she might marry a human brute. Add to this a prevailing doubt of "female virtue or capacity," and we have an inkling of the awful general depravity of woman.

Yet there must have been in that little company of saints women who bore the lilies of purity! What a beautiful story Chrysostom tells of Acte, the Asiatic slave. She was a slave in Cæsar's household. Endowed with rare physical beauty, Nero sought to make her his victim. But the Gospel reached her through Saint Paul. Saved from a life of shame, she became a jewel glittering in that heap of filth. The Spirit which fanned into a glowing flame the dying embers of purity in the breast of Mary Magdalene, swept also through the soul of the beautiful Acte, making her heart a throne of whiteness and her life a temple of virtue. And that power which makes for the purity of womanhood will never leave the world—not until

the wings of thought are folded upon the throbbless heart of God! Forever pledged to fight for you is the Spirit that inspired St. Paul's message: "All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Cæsar's household."

VI

Consider, finally, that Cæsar's saints lived in an age of cruelty and voluptuousness. The Christians were covered with pitch and turned into torches for illuminating Nero's garden parties. Christianity was the smoking flax of history, the bruised reed of destiny, but under God it was neither quenched nor broken. Men were forced to fight wild beasts for the entertainment of the masses. Standing amid the ruins of the Coliseum, a shudder came over me as the guide pointed out the animal pits. Here ferocious beasts were kept for days, without food, that they might all the more eagerly whet their appetite upon God's saints in the public shows. "Christians to the lions!" was a shout that aroused an infernal joy among the people. Historians tell us that Pompey turned 600 lions into the arena in one day; that Augustus entertained the people with 420 panthers; that during the games of Trajan, "ten thousand gladiators fought, and ten thousand beasts were slain"; that twenty elephants fought with a band of 600 captives; that Gordian turned into the arena ten Indian tigers and 300 African hyenas.

To this cruelty was added a mad desire for pleasure. Not only gladiatorial shows, but chariot races and theatres enthralled the multitudes with their deadly charm. The serious business of life had passed away, and amusement was king. It is estimated that the public pleasure resorts—the Amphitheatre of Titus, the Circus Maximus, and the Theatre of Pompey—would accommodate more than 400,000 people. Public baths became centres of vice. They were kept open night and day. The rich almost lived in them. It is said Commodus ate in the bath. Some bathed as high as seven times a day. They bathed before eating, and then bathed again after eating, to create a new hunger. Baths were built on a magnificent scale, and the genius of art was prostituted by throwing upon the marble walls pictures of shame. In the baths of Pompeii are representations that ought to bring a blush to the cheek of a demon. Standing on the summit of Mount Vesuvius, I looked upon the ruins of the buried city in the distance. I thought of the licentiousness of Pompeii in the zenith of her glory—her pride, her wealth, her splendour—yes, and her nameless sin. And, then, turning to the volcano—that fire-vomiting monster pocketed in the mountain's heart—I wondered if that was not the only remedy for a city so deeply steeped in infamy and lust. At any rate, that remedy was applied. Fire is a great cleanser, and both Nature and Nature's God believe in keeping things clean. But

if a city the size of Pompeii was so alarmingly bad, what must have been the condition of the great city on the Tiber, with its teeming millions?

But in that midnight of human history, when the Roman's star of hope had fallen from the sky, when his moon was turned into blood, when his sun refused to give light, another Star and another Sun shone in the heavens of humanity. The Roman night was melting away under the radiant kiss of the Christian dawn. The Star of Bethlehem and the Sun of Righteousness billowed the darkness with their silver lightnings, as God's golden morning burst in splendour over the hills of the world. There were spiritual astronomers in old Rome. Paul was the Kepler among them. Belting on the telescope of a deathless Faith, they had seen a new planet come into being. That new planet was the Son of God, the Light of the world, the King of suffering, the Lord of Life. No meteor this to shed a transitory brilliance, and then disappear. Looking closely, they beheld a fixed star, the centre of the soul's solar system, dragging the heart's planets and satellites after Him. With upturned faces, Cæsar's saints caught a glimpse of His matchless glory—a vision that transfigured their sorrow, sanctified their suffering, lightened their darkness, halved their burdens, conquered their fears, banished their doubts, and immortalized their hopes. Their monument cannot be wrought in

brass, their works will not perish with the worlds,
their blood has become the seed of the Church, and
their salutation is a part of the music of the ages.
“ All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of
Cæsar's household.”

XIV

THE EASTER PILGRIMS

"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth."—HEBREWS xi. 13.

WHAT a big universe Christ makes for the soul! Before that first Easter dawn, men were smothering to death for lack of heavenly atmosphere. They had brawn enough, they had brain enough, they had hopes and visions and prophecies. But going toward the shadowy land, they were oppressed by sins and doubts and sobs and fears. The little rift within life's lute had widened into tragic dimensions. Fronting the iron gate of death, whose hinges were rusty, whose key was lost, even gigantic souls quivered like young grasses in the roaring breath of March. Noble arguments for immortality there were, finely grown philosophies that flowered upon the stalk of intellect, classic reasonings worthy of the mind of Greece and Rome. For another life, there were suggestions galore, but not a single, definite, satisfying demonstration. Death was king, and he re-

fused to be dethroned by instincts immature or syllogisms full-grown. Sitting sullen and grim, clothed in robes of night and gloom, his chill breath blew all philosophic paper-wads back into the faces of his assailants.

But on Easter Day there was a turn in the tide, a change in the battle, a new music in the threnody. What turned the dark river into shimmering silver? What changed the losing battle into splendid triumph? What forced the minors out of the human song and let in a burst of angelic melodies? Oh, ask the noble living and the noble dead, and they will blend their voices with the angels, the living creatures, and the elders round about the throne, saying: "Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain to receive the power, and riches, and wisdom, and might, and honour, and glory, and blessing."

Yes; on Easter Day the King of Life killed the king of death. For death's horrible power was concentrated in a single spot, one dread poison-bag from which protruded the sin-sting. Now, on Easter, Christ completed His work of extracting the sin-sting. Extract the sting from the honey bee, and it dies. But the big, black bee of death, buzzed everywhither with his sin-sting. Thus he stung on and on, until he stung Christ, and then he stung himself to death. Ever since, the corpse of death has been morgued in glooms deeper than his own long, unlit night. For Easter proves that death is dead, that life is alive forevermore. "I

am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth on Me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on Me shall never die."

So, the risen King has walked our way, and honoured us. Christ has created breathing room for the soul. Now we may inhale the spiritual ozone of the keen, Christly winds blowing down from unseen hills, and never die. Our Lord has made for all souls a big, spacious, deathless, home-like universe. With one hand He sewed up that ugly wound named the grave, while with the other He opened up a trysting-place for all redeemed spirits in yonder white, eternal city with its pavement of stars.

Now, in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, we have a fine delineation of earth's Easter pilgrims, celestial pioneers, magnificent men and glorious women, walking their vast ways to "the city which hath the foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Very dear is this picture of that ancient pilgrim band. Living far, far away in the olden time, yet they are not altogether antique. There is in them nothing suggestive of the obsolete. They are vital, vernal, puissant folk. They are alive with a compelling modernity. Somehow they seem to have been wrought into the fabric of things. Like the sun, they radiate brightness. Like the stars, they shed calmness. Like the winds, they speak of health. Like the sea, they proclaim vastness. Like the morning, they sing of freshness. Like the

evening, they whisper of quietness. They are cosmopolitan, universal, eternal men, tall with noble spiritual height. Gray with the flying dust of silent centuries, still they are strangely young with the youth of timeless mornings. I think of them as a band of singing pilgrims. They came out of history's dawn fingering their harp of faith, chanting their song of hope, hymning their heart-red lyrics of love. From morn they pilgrimed on to life's high noon; but still their faith-music flowed like a melodious river. From noon they travelled on toward evening; but more and more a ringing resonance swelled their song. Standing at last upon the sunset hills, white-hearted and spirit-clad, they leaped over the lustrous bars of sundown into a day that knows neither noon nor night. The high beginners of a new, immortal time, by faith they "slew the huge man-beast of boundless savagery," as they walked their dying way to life!

So, my text is a soul-history of "The Easter Pilgrims." Their death, their unfulfilled ideals, their vision, their confession—are not these the golden windows through which we may gaze a little into that inner, spiritual house wherein they homed while on earth?

I

Consider, first, that the death of these Easter pilgrims was characterized by a grand peculiarity: "These all died in faith." What, then, is the pe-

culiar grandeur of their dying? Surely it is not in death itself. For nothing is more common than death, unless it be the common delusion harboured by men—that they will not die until to-morrow, or the morrow's morrow, or next year, or the year after, plus ten years more, perhaps. No: there is nothing unique in the fact that these folk died. The unique thing is the manner, the mood, the soul-angle in which they died. And what was that? "These all died"—stop there, and you hear only the dirge that dips to the grave. "These all died—in faith"! Ah! here is wing-power; here is bud and blossom and bloom; here is fragrance and wind and sky; here is life and light and love. Here is space, not a tomb; here is height, not a grave; here is heaven, not a charnel-house. For when people die in faith, they do not die at all. They simply bid their bodies good-bye, wish them a pleasant, painless fall back to dust, and go on home to God. Absent from the body, they are present with the Lord. Faith affirms: "The godhead which is ours can never utterly be shamed or stilled." Faith declares—

"The immortal spirit, with godlike power,
Informs, creates, and thaws the deepest sleep
That time can lay upon her."

Faith sings—

"Sighing, I turned away; but ere
Night fell I heard, or seemed to hear,

Music that sorrow comes not near—
A ritual hymn,
Chanted in love that casts out fear
By Seraphim."

Furthermore, the manner of their death casts a wondrous light upon the Easter Pilgrims' life. They died in faith because they had lived by faith. Now, a life ordered by faith is a tremendous achievement, a sublime spectacle. Did you say these were dreamy, moonstruck people? Did you imagine that they were religious dilettanti? Did you think they were heavenly loafers, not over-anxious for a job? Then you have misjudged them, you have wronged them, yea, you have slandered them. Why, they were as steady as the stars, as rugged as the Himalayas, as fearless as a den of wounded lions! They subdued kingdoms, they wrought righteousness, they obtained promises, they quenched the power of fire, they escaped the edge of the sword, they waxed mighty in war, they turned to flight armies of aliens! They were not anæmic—they were splendidly alive. They were not soft-fibred—they were heroically fashioned. They were not lollers—they were strenuously energetic. And why were they so religiously gladiatorial, so spiritually palatial? Listen—because the windows of their souls were wide open to God. They breathed in faith, they wrought through faith, they walked by faith.

Would you, too, become an Easter Pilgrim?

Then look well to thy faith! Faith is the Christian's Excalibur—no mythical sword, but a keen, cleaving, double-edged blade bathed in the heaven of love and truth. Not long ago hundreds of people witnessed a battle royal on the Hudson River. A wild deer had in some way taken passage on a cake of ice. Half a mile from shore, the floe, with its mountain passenger, was being carried up stream by the tide. Besides the human faces on the shore, there was a winged creature watching the deer from above—a great, fierce eagle with a Gotham appetite. Now, the deer seemed to be lying down, making the most of a chilly voyage. Again and again the eagle attempted to close in on the unfortunate creature. But every time the ravenous bird hovered near, instantly the deer was on its feet, fighting for its life. There is the nerve, the calm, the daring of faith. You cannot frighten the fight out of faith, if it feeds on Christ. You cannot drift away into permanent gloom, if your soul-eyes are set on Christ. Chilled, wearied, carried out to unknown seas on strange voyages, yet Christ will fire thy heart with a flame no howling winds can snuff out, no chilling waters quench. Have you faith in God, faith in the promises, faith in the city that lies over the hills of time? Then you are a true Easter Pilgrim, you are deathlessly alive—alive forevermore—made alive in Christ Jesus, eternalized by His power, lifted beyond the grasp of death, even while you walk among death's skulls

and crossbones! The Christian may say with his Lord "I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive forevermore." This is the faith-tune he ever chants:

"My window is the open sky,
The flower in farthest wood is mine;
I am the heir to all gone by,
The eldest son of all the line.
And when the robbers Time and Death
Athwart my path conspiring stand,
I cheat them with a clod, a breath,
And pass the sword from hand to hand!"

II

The Easter Pilgrims died in the consciousness of the unfulfilled: "Not having received the promises." Well, then, are the promises unreal; is God untrue? Never! Wall Street may break, and Threadneedle Street may shake, but the promises suffer no panic. They rest upon God's justice, God's goodness, God's truth, God's power, and God's oath. Why, then, did not these pioneers of faith receive the promises? I am glad the answer is at hand: "And these all, having had witness borne to them through their faith, received not the promise, God having provided some better thing concerning us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect." That is, their perfection requires our perfection. In a word, they did not receive the promises—at least all of them—because

the promises are so big, so vast, so all-inclusive. The promises involve ages, generations, millenniums. The promises link time and eternity, heaven and earth, men and angels. The promises flash a circle of perfection round the universe. Stoned, sawn asunder, tempted, slain, destitute, afflicted, the faith-heroes received enough of the promises to live and die on. And did they not live gloriously? Did they not die victoriously? Still they did not impoverish the riches of grace contained in the promises. "The best thing about our universe is that it is an unfinished one; and that we, in our several positions, are called in as co-workers in the finishing of it." These are the words of one of the most perceiving minds of our time. But do they not simply express in modern phrase the old, inner truth of Christianity? We glory in a perfect God and Father, a perfect Saviour, a perfect Comforter, but we have not yet a perfect world, inhabited by perfect men and women. Nevertheless, we do believe in human perfectibility, and why? Because God in Christ has put our human nature on and worn it up the hills of light, beyond "the gold gateways of the stars," where He is preparing for us a home with all of earth's liliated Easter Pilgrims. Not yet do we see all things subjected to God. But we do see the risen, reigning Christ, we do see Jesus—and that is enough for this world, for all worlds!

Now, do not all pure souls, dying in the con-

sciousness of the unfulfilled, prove their kinship with these dead of old? That little white mystery, that innocent babe—scarcely remaining with its mother long enough to climb even the lower slopes of the ascending peaks of consciousness—was it not full of unwhispered possibility, of unpacked soul treasure, of unspoken eloquence, of unwrought deeds, of unsung songs, of untold loves? Why, God toiled on His universe ten thousand ages of ages before it was possible for that strange little creature to breathe a breath. The promise of character, of faith, of vision budded in that darling life. But it received not the promise—not here!

I think of another pilgrim—one of the most brilliant earth ever saw. He walked the laughing ways of boyhood, scaled the blooming slopes of youth, stood clean and knightly upon the green summits of promiscuous manhood. The vision he beheld was very fair—a vision of home, of wedded love, of silver-voiced children, of immortal, unwritten poems, of high human friendships. One day in old Vienna his scholarly father entered the room. Supposing his son to be sleeping, the great historian of the Middle Ages sat down to write. Writing on and on, at last he asked himself: “Why does Arthur sleep so long?” Stealing over to the couch, he found his wordless answer. Arthur Hallam was already sleeping the long last sleep. Oh, there was wondrous promise here, a character of noble

suggestiveness, of ample endowments. But the youth died, not having received the promise—not here!

And what shall we say of that numberless company who were neither famous nor brilliant, who barely lifted their heads, like wayside violets, above earth's sod, only to be trampled out of sight by the pitiless feet of the noisy years? We are familiar with the gifted lovers. Laura had her Petrarch, Beatrice had her Dante, Philippa Picard had her Chaucer, Alessandra Strozzi had her Ariosto, Rosalind had her Spenser, Stella had her Sydney, Emily Tennyson had her Hallam, and Hallam had his gloriously gifted friend. But what of the unvoiced loves, whose stories were never heard save by the ear of the all-loving God? We are familiar with the heroes, the captains, the kings, the discoverers, the philosophers, the sculptors, the painters, the prophets, the poets. But what of the failures? What of those who never built? What of those who never voyaged beyond their native village? What of those who never chiselled in life, and who, in death, did not even get their names chiselled upon a crumbling headstone. Thinking of them, we cry with Holmes:

“O hearts that break and give no sign
 Save whitening lip and fading tresses,
 Till Death pours out his longed-for wine
 Slow-dropped from Misery's crushing presses,—
 If singing breath or echoing chord
 To every hidden pang were given,

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What endless melodies were poured,
As sad as earth, as sweet as heaven!"

Up in Connecticut the other day, I was watching the school children—happy boys and swan-faced girls—running across the April hills and meadows. School was out, and they were racing home. Some carried shining tin-buckets, some empty baskets, some balls and bats, some waved bonnets that had seen better, though never very prosperous, days. Oh, what a living, human poem, what a flesh-and-blood picture, what a heavenly parable! As I looked at the joyful creatures, my vision swept down the dim pathways of history. This great, strange world became a schoolhouse standing along one of the vast highways of the universe, the human generations of long ago became little children, having learned their lessons well or ill, running home to God, with a yearning sense of incompleteness haunting them all. Having had witness borne to them through their faith, they received not the promise, God having provided some better thing concerning us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect. The great Italian was not content to liken his fair one to a rose—she was a rose “unfolding her paradise of leaves.” On this Easter day, I think the heart of God is an infinite white rose, the spirits of just men made perfect are the petals, the tears of earth’s disappointed are the refreshing dews, and the spiritual incense that sweetens our world is the prayers of all

saints—the dawn-like beauty of the Easter Pilgrims unfolding their paradise of spiritual rose-leaves!

Therefore, let us not forget that the distress of the unrealized in Hallam's death-frosted life opened up exhaustless fountains of music in Tennyson's soul, whose sobs melted into a world-wide, rolling river of song:

“ So, dearest, now thy brows are cold,
We see thee as thou art, and know
Thy likeness to the wise below,
Thy kindred with the great of old.”

Alas! too often we look upon cold brows before we see souls as they are! Not so with God. No flesh-veil can hide the fleshless spirit of man from His eye. Not without reason, we chant our elegies here. Gray's poem is so popular because it floats upon its rhythmic tide the broken, battered heart-ships of the ages. Yet, in the transfiguring splendour of the Easter dawn, one is made to wonder if there is not very near us an unseen melody-sphere where earth's elegies are touched into heavenly oratorios. No Christian spirit ever wore its cloth of clod without the prophetic ache of the unfulfilled. And when the winds of death make the final rent in his movable tent of clay, swifter than light he leaps to meet and greet the promises in a country of his own. He wings His way to the Saviour of those who died, not having received the promises, but having seen them and greeted them from afar.

III

Finally, there is in my text, the Easter Pilgrims' Confession: "Having confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." Now, some modern people are apt to treat this confession with good-natured contempt. "Why, are not we familiar with the earth? Are not we masters of the earth? Are not we owners of the earth? How mawkish, then, to intimate that we are either pilgrims or strangers on the earth!" Is not this the voice of our time? Yet, the last heart-throb, the last pulse-beat, the last farewell proclaims the twentieth century man a pilgrim just as truly as was Abraham, or Moses, or David. The cut of his clothes may be different, the inner stuff of his soul is just the same!

Viewed in man's great moods, the confession is very grand, very august, my brethren. For what does it mean? It means that man is too big for earth. It means that "man's soul is larger than the sky." It means that after all time can do for us, we still require eternity for self-realization. What a fascinating biography is this of William Sharp! Known in life as a literary critic, his death in 1905 revealed the truth that he was also the famous unknown Celtic poetess, Fiona Macleod. As William Sharp, he was a brilliant critic of literature, an editor of anthologies, an author of lives of Rossetti, Heine, and Shelley. But as Fiona

Macleod, he was a wondrous dreamer of dreams, a tuneful human cargo freighted with the antique memories of the race, a warbler of "the Green Life," a writer of earth's mysteries in poetry and prose. At the age of six, this strange man-woman was found worshipping at a rural altar he had built in a pine wood near his father's house. Dying, his last words were: "Oh, the beautiful 'Green Life' again!" His dust sleeps beneath an Iona Cross, bearing these words, chosen by himself:

"Farewell to the known and exhausted,
Welcome the unknown and illimitable!"

Oh, that is what it means to be an Easter Pilgrim—an exhauster of the known and exhaustible, a welcomer of the unknown and illimitable! Recently, I heard a woman quote these words from her friend's letter: "We struggle through the winter only to turn round in the spring to see how many we have lost." Easter says no! Rather, see how many you have beyond the power of losing, beyond time, beyond pain, sickness, and sorrow. For when Christ's lovers say farewell to the known and exhausted, their inner ear doubtless hears the golden bells of Heaven ringing: "Welcome home, O Pilgrims of the night. You have wandered long in a way checkered by shadow and light, tears and joy. Beholding your loved ones vanish, you wondered and wondered where they were. Oh, come and see! Mansioned by light, baptized by

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love, fountained by life, you, too, are home at last, throned with those who died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth!"

THE END